

















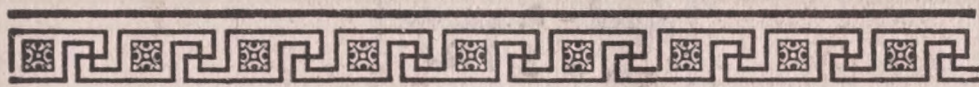








# G O R G O

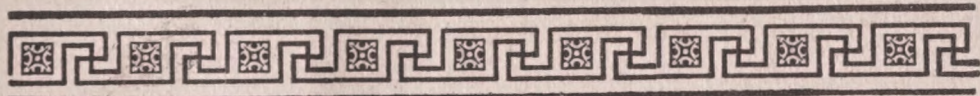
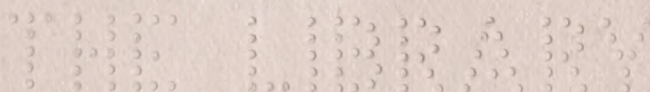


A Romance *of* Old Athens

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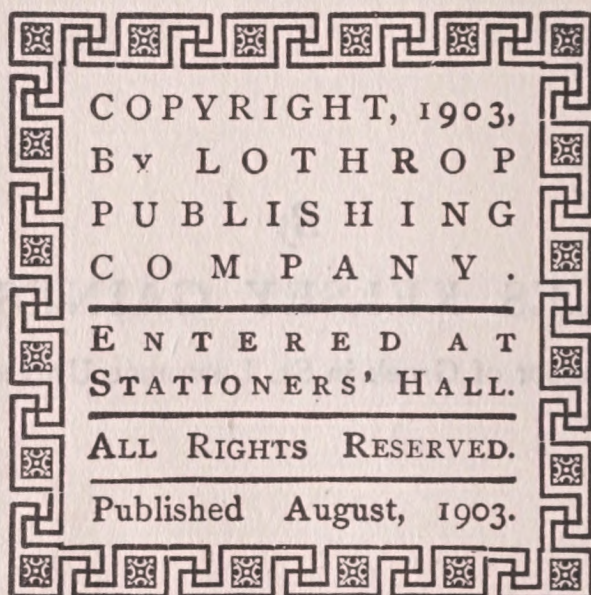
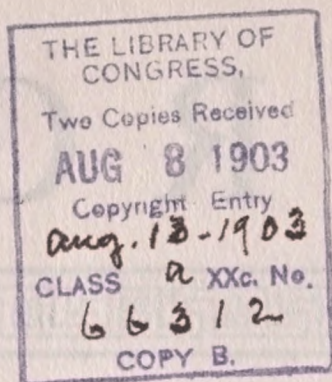
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LOTHROP PUBLISHING COMPANY  
BOSTON







*TO MY DEAR SISTER*  
HELEN A. COWEN

THE SONG OF THE LARK  
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## P R O L O G U E

**I** STOPPED short; I flung down the book. "It is a lie," I cried, bitterly, "a cruel, hateful lie,"

I almost shouted, — and the whole class stared at me in amazement.

A strange outburst was that for the dingy, drowsy Greek-room of a little New England college. I was as much surprised as any; I stood confounded at myself. For then it was that I remembered.

The passage which I was translating seemed innocent enough — to all the rest. We were reading at sight — the professor's particular hobby; and he was exploiting upon us the Twelfth Oration of Lysias, assigning parts here, there, anywhere. How the boys all dreaded those paper-covered Teubner texts which he used to distribute for this exercise, — printed in quirkish type that made the most familiar words look new and meaningless! To many of us this sight-reading was an ordeal like walking blindfold over hot ploughshares.

But I had been paying scant attention to what they were reading. Greek was easy to me always, and the halting drone with which they turned the sweet Attic into their class-room jargon wearied



## P R O L O G U E

my ears. Indeed, it fretted my nerves: "A squeaking Illyrian would hardly haggle it worse," I muttered to myself. And my thoughts had drifted far away into I know not what region of day-dreams, under a bright sky buttressed on purple hills, when I heard the incisive voice of the professor:

"Leonard, you may read now, beginning with the seventy-eighth section." It cut through the mists of cloudland like the flash of a searchlight.

I started to my feet, found the place and began:

"'And although he has been the author of all these and still other disasters and disgraces, both old and new, both small and great, some dare to profess themselves his friends; although it was not for the people that Theramenes died, but because of his own villainy —'"

Then I choked and stopped. Tears swam in my eyes, and a hot flush scalded my cheeks. For in that instant first I understood; and in that instant it seemed to me that they all understood.

But the professor, rather mortified at my unwonted hesitation, began to prompt:

"Go on, Leonard, — 'Having paid a just forfeit under the oligarchy, for already he had betrayed it,' — go on, it is not hard — 'and no less justly would he have died under the democracy, which he twice enslaved' — why, Leonard!"

For there — "It is a lie," I burst forth, "a cruel, hateful lie." Those words which he uttered so calmly had stung me like the lashes of a scourge, — so malignant, so artful, so utterly unjust. And



## P R O L O G U E

the whole world had read them — this had been believed for centuries, with none to contradict!

“To say it when a man was dead!” I went on. “And Lysias! for Lysias to say it!” I had quite forgotten the class; I saw only the foppish, waspish little orator, declaiming before the people with studied passion and hot indignation well memorised. But the people had never accepted it! They knew me better. And Thrasybulus — surely he had made some answer!

“They would not listen to such as Lysias; they would make an uproar and rise from the benches. How dared that alien accuse the best blood of Athens!” Yet I could scarcely have told you why I said it.

My classmates were too much astonished to laugh. The professor laid down his book; mine I flung on the floor. My blood was boiling, my soul a tumult.

“What does this mean, Leonard?” I heard the voice; I could not clearly see the speaker.

“I will not read it — I will not read another line,” I cried. “It is worse than the malice of Critias, — and from Lysias!” For the past had opened like a darkness lightning-cleft; all in one moment I felt the injustice of ages, the shame of an æon of scorn — and they asked me to read against myself the lying record. I would die again sooner than read it. I could not realise that they did not comprehend.

It was not often that Professor Lalor was at a



## P R O L O G U E

loss for words, but there was a long pause before he spoke.

"Young man," he said, slowly, "I always like my students to manifest a living interest in what they read, and this trait I have especially commended in you heretofore. But there is measure, Leonard, in all things, as the Greeks themselves have taught us; and this exceeds — this certainly exceeds. One would fancy you claimed to know more of these matters than Lysias himself, — a contemporary authority."

And here the suppressed laughter broke loose behind me. Again I had choked, but anger gave me back my speech.

"Lysias an authority!" I exclaimed. "Lysias!"

My sight had cleared. The class sat quiet, startled out of their laughter; the professor looked pained and puzzled.

"There is a degree of truth in what you seem to imply," he said. "It may be conceded that Lysias was somewhat lacking in the judicial quality. And as to Theramenes, Aristotle has expressed a very different estimate of him; and Xenophon, too, has applauded his behaviour in that final scene. Yet Lysias —"

"He was no better than a sycophant," I broke in.

"Go to your room, Leonard. You forget yourself." But the truth was, I had remembered myself.

After that they nicknamed me Theramenes: I was nicknamed after myself, and none suspected.



# P R O L O G U E

But when I left college the title dropped from me, — which was fortunate, doubtless, for I am still active in politics, and that name, with the slanders that lie upon it now, is not one to be desired. You may guess as you like as to who I am; I have given you no real clue.

Yet I could not forget my past; the sense of the wrong done my name has ever rankled. And as my thoughts have dwelt amid those old experiences, the memory of every minutest circumstance has grown clear, — yes, clearer than the things about me, just as an old man forgets yesterday, but remembers all the little things of childhood. So it is that I remember my life in Athens.

Forget! I have far too much to remind me. What is this seething democracy in which we live but Athens renewed? In a thousand ways I am reminded — but I forbear. Yet — do you imagine that I alone among living men have walked those ancient streets? Not so: but the rest do not remember. And what but a dark cloud of things unremembered is this that overshadows most of us — like a sense of fate, only it lies somewhere in a past as unknown and uncertain as the future! They will never recall it — those others — unless I should tell them; and I have told but one.

Could it be the same? My heart rang like a lyre when all the strings are swept and sing together. “Grant me, O Jove, this one thing,” I began, with hands uplifted; then stopped. I knew that Jove was nothing — a pagan fancy. But if one has been



# P R O L O G U E

brought up to pray, there are times when he will pray — even to Jove.

No: I have not forgotten; nor, I fear, forgiven. Not even to-day can I quite live up to the teachings of Socrates, — still less, those of him who came after, teaching the same, and more, with a higher authority. Thence should arise the chief difference between that old world and the new; yet men are much the same.

I, too, am the same, — even more than others, because I remember. And because I am the same, and know it, the stain upon my ancient life is hard to bear; I cannot die again and leave the story untold — nay, mistold, which is far worse.

And of this I spoke at last to her to whom I had already spoken wonderful words — fulfilling a promise.

“O boy,” she cried, “you shall write of that thing in a book, and tell all the truth.”

And this is the book.



# G O R G O

I.

## *The Flight*

**M**Y first vague memories of anything belonging to the world are of the country — of a great sunshine and a sound of bees, and of playing with a big, shaggy dog that stood and cast his shadow over me as I rolled naked on the sand. For I was born before the evil days of the war that drove us from our homes into the crowded city. Yet it is mainly because of the war that I remember the dog. For as I tugged at his throat, clutching the loose skin with both fists, I heard a sound that was like the distant bellowing of bulls before the altar. And it broke the quiet into turmoil, as when a stone is dashed into a pool. For the dog sprang from me, barking; and the women rushed forth and caught me up, and smothered me in the folds of a mantle. And while I screamed and struggled, there came a clatter of hoofs and such another bellowing blast that I thought the



bulls had broke loose and were upon us; and words that I could not understand were shouted in a strange, hoarse voice. Then the clamour passed on, and they hurried me inside the house.

But the quiet which was that day broken never came back. I was never again to play with the dog or scramble in the sand; and little enough I saw of the sunshine for many a month. For the sound which had frightened me from my play was the trumpet sent out by Pericles to call the people within the walls; and the words that rumbled without meaning in my ears were big with thrice nine years of war, telling of the approach of the Spartan Archidamus with sixty thousand men.

That night we fled, with our servants and our cattle and whatever we could carry. I had my last glimpse of home as I was borne away to the covered wagon, crying and reaching back with my hands, — though in after years I found there its dead embers, sunk in the dust amid calcined stones, and saw the black stumps of the orchard where the bees had swarmed. But of that dark journey I remember little, — only cries and confusion, and much lashing of men and beasts, and an interminable jolting over the hills, until I sobbed myself asleep in my nurse's arms.

Yet what I saw in the morning I remember very clearly; it was all so new. For when I awoke the wheels were running quite smoothly, crisping over compacted sand, and a strange, keen odour was in the air; and as the curtains flapped the sunshine



flashed in and out. Then I perceived that I was alone, lying upon a pile of fleeces, with many skins and garments heaped about me, making a great nest lined with the wool. But I was vexed at being alone, and began to wail; whereupon some one parted the curtains and lifted me out. And the sunlight flashed in my eyes from ten thousand tumbling waves, and the waters ran up the beach in wide bands of gold and green and purple, breaking at our very feet, so that my face was damp with the spray, and I crowed and clapped my hands, until my nurse could hardly hold me, for that was my first sight of the sea. My father laughed at this, and said that the people of Athens had surely provoked the anger of Dionysus, for now we were all turned into dolphins from our birth, — which, of course, I could not at all understand, but it impressed me mightily, so that I lay very still, fearing about the dolphins, and watching the sun-flashes from my father's helmet and from his spear-point as he walked. For he used the spear as a staff, but the rest of his arms lay on a cart, and a boy was leading his horse.

Presently we came to a huge wall, so tall that it seemed to go up into the sky and stopped everything; and this, I thought, must be the end of the world, where Hercules went for the apples. Then I saw that there was a gate under the wall, and a great multitude waiting before it with carts and cattle; and I thought that perhaps we were dead, and this was the entrance to Pluto's country, and



I hid my face for fear of the dog with three heads. And putting my lips close to my nurse's ear, I asked her if indeed this was Pluto's gate, and if the noise I heard within was the growling of the dog. But at that she started as if I had bitten her, and cried: "Apollo avert the sign! For the child is ominous, and has breathed in my ear an evil word at the threshold, to be a bane to us all."

Her tone terrified me, so that I screamed; whereat my mother came quickly, and beat the woman and took me away. When I had told her my fear she frowned a little, but kissed me, and said that this was no such evil thing as I had thought, but only the gate of Piræus, and that we were going to live in Athens for awhile, in our city house, until the Spartans were all driven away. And she told me that I must take care never to think evil thoughts, nor speak them; for the gods, when they heard ill words, would sometimes make them true. But when she saw that I was still troubled, she said that it was not likely the gods had noticed such a little whisper in so loud a noise, which comforted me greatly.

Yet from that hour there came into my soul a dread which I had not felt before, and I speculated much about the deep, dark underworld, though I feared such thoughts were wicked and unsafe. As for the nurse, she could never bear to be with me afterward, nor could I abide her presence. So she was set to other tasks; but not for long, for



when the plague came she was the first from our house that died.

But that morning we had no thought of the plague, which was still in Egypt, but only of the army of Archidamus, which was already upon our borders. Even while we waited, a light-armed runner came up panting, and was let in through a little door, which opened and shut quickly. I was growing very hungry and impatient, but at length the heavy gates swung back, and we all rushed in, I sitting astride my father's shoulder because of the crush, gripping hard on the crest of his helmet, as if it had been indeed a horse's mane.

And within I had my first vision of a city, — though, of course, I only remember what printed itself upon my childish eye. Behind loomed the great wall, steep and high, like an encircling precipice. Before us rose a long slope covered with houses, close packed and lying in courses, like the red tiles on a roof, only between the tiers ran narrow cracks that were streets. All around us in the open spaces men and women and slaves were thronging, in fluttering garments of red and blue and gray, and others in sheepskins, and some almost naked, — such a multitude that it seemed to me the whole world must be gathered there. They were crowding and pressing among carts and horses and oxen and mules and asses, and the clamour was as when the herdsmen brought the cattle home to the sheds, only ten times greater. Further away I could only see a rolling field of heads, some bare and



some in leather caps, with here and there the glint of a helmet; and this extended as far as I could see at all.

I suppose that we had come to Piræus first on account of the cattle, for I saw no more of them. Indeed, my attention was wholly taken up with the wild scene through which my father was bearing me; but presently he halted beside a door, which opened to let us in, but was hastily closed and barred as soon as we had entered. The rooms seemed very wide and cool and dark, and many servants were going about very quietly. Here I sat on a rug and had a great drink of goat's milk and nibbled at a string of figs, listening the while to the trampling and shouting outside, and wondering if the wall would not be burst in.

But we did not linger long, for after a little my father got upon his horse, and I was lifted up and set before him — which delighted me greatly, for I had always admired my father's horse, but had never been on his back; and so we forced our way through many narrow streets and crowded squares, some of the servants marching in front with staves to open a passage. From Piræus we must have passed by the broad avenue between the Long Walls all the way to the Upper Town, for I remember the overshadowing battlements on either side, and the ranges of tents and cabins which had been set up beneath them as a shelter for the fugitives; and in one place I saw women sitting in the mouths of great earthen jars which had been laid side-



wise in rows, with children peeping out over their shoulders like puppies from a kennel. The crowds were now less dense, yet the road was obstructed with piles of furniture and bedding, and the people were going and coming everywhere. Then we passed through another gate between two towers, where ranks of soldiers stood on guard with glittering shields and heavy lances; they looked so terrible that I wondered if the Spartans would ever dare to meet them. Thence we came again between lines of houses, and the press and tumult were so great that we could scarcely make any headway, until at last we issued into a great square, fenced in with rows of creamy columns and long painted porches; and this, too, swarmed with people, tossing their heads like the huddled beasts in a stock-yard, so that the whole expanse quaked and weltered like a pond as I looked down upon it from the horse. Here something chanced beyond the understanding of a child, yet such that I could not well forget it.

For as we entered this place, one of our servants, vexed with pushing and buffeting, struck with his stick a fellow in a leather cap who was insolent and would not make way for my father. And the man yelled with rage, and snatched the stick from our servant and brandished it against my father, railing at him for an aristocrat and an oligarch and a hater of the people, — words which sounded very dreadful in my ears. In a moment such a throng was gathered around us that we could not go forward; the servants dropped their staves and slunk behind us.



The man who had been struck kept threatening my father with the stick, crying out that here was an aristocrat riding down the common people and setting his slaves to beat them; I could hear my father grinding his teeth above my head, but he did not answer. Then some one threw a shard of a broken pot, and it hit the horse and stung him, so that he reared till I thought we would fall backward; and others in the crowd began to grope on the ground for stones.

But just as they were lifting their hands to throw, a great voice came booming in our ears, like the crash of a long wall falling; they paused and turned, even as they were swaying back their arms. And we saw a big man, with a coarse face and wide jaws and a black, bushy beard, shouldering through the crush; those who stood in his way he thrust aside with arms that were like a pair of legs for thickness, demanding why they were casting stones. Then, before any could answer, my father, slipping from the horse, caught me up and ran toward the man and laid me in his arms; and my father spoke with a voice that shook as I had never heard it, not even when he spoke in anger among the slaves.

“Cleon,” he said, “elsewhere we may contend, but here I stand as your suppliant and thank the gods who have sent you for my need. This boy, my only son, I lay in your hands as a pledge, and it shall well be worth your while to save him and me. My servant has struck a citizen, — not at my bidding, I swear it. Take the slave; he is yours



to kill or keep, as you will, and more shall be added. You know me, what I am. But quiet these madmen."

At first the man scowled and looked away, and made as if he would drop me on the ground, but I caught him by the beard so that he winced and held me up; and I cried: "Man, my father is not an aristocrat. He has come to fight the wicked Spartans."

At that the big face began to pucker, and the man broke into a laugh that was more like a bray; and hoisting me high he strode forward, shouting:

"Citizens, are you waging war on babies while the Spartans hew and burn in sight of the city walls? Is it a time to fling stones when the enemy are hurling spears? I love not these knights — you know it well; and some day, with the help of Father Demus, I hope to pluck them off their horses to walk like you and me. But what of that to-day? There is war. The man is no traitor; I will stand for it. By Apollo, the first that lifts his hand to throw shall ride the knight's horse himself where the darts are singing. As for Thraso there, let him cudgel the slave that swung the staff. His master yields him up; what more can you ask? Thump him, then, till he howls, — but make way for the knight who will battle for Athens. Did you not hear the word of the child? He speaks from his mother, and I will back him against twenty such liars as swear by all the gods on Olympus for three obols."



And they fell back crying, "Cleon is right!" and "Well said, Cleon!" I heard the stones dropping from their hands, thudding upon the hard earth.

Then Cleon gave me such a squeeze that I gasped for breath, and with another laugh he tossed me back to my father. "Go quickly, Hagnon," he said, "while the stones lie at rest; and to-morrow send the slave as you have promised, with what more you will. Remember that but for the Tanner you would have slept this night under a monument of shards and tiles, and Athens would have had another tale of Lycidas to fright aristocrats. See to it that the boy's word be true, that you fight for Athens, not plot against her. And let him not again be laid in the track of the plough, Hagnon. Our Demus is no Odysseus; there is no feigning in his fits of madness. Some day when Pericles is busy with Aspasia, and Cleon is not at hand, it may go hard with you. Forget not the slave."

Thus far the whole scene so lives in my memory that I can even see the long shadow of a hand which seemed to reach out and clutch at our servant when Cleon pointed toward him. For on that day I was like a child who sits for the first time in a theatre, watching the actors so intently that he recalls every word and gesture and mimics them afterward in his play, repeating long speeches with every cadence perfect, but the meaning all awry. But after we left the great square I grew very weary, and remember nothing more until at last we stopped at the door of our city house.



## II.

### *Under Siege*

**E**VEN from the beginning the war had taken an evil bent, and the crowded town, like a caldron when the fire grows hot and the lid is pressed down too closely, hissed and sputtered with discontent. The people were furious because the generals would not lead them out to battle. Cleon stormed in the market; the rabble roared for an assembly; tumult filled the streets. The fugitive farmers swarmed on the walls, and leaned from the battlements and cursed, while the enemy ravaged the fields unhindered in the plain below; and the angry watchers almost leaped from the turrets as they saw their hamlets blazing and their fruit-trees toppling to the axe. Only Pericles sat unmoved, — a very Sphinx of Egypt, cold and stony, brooding over the nation's destiny. He rarely spoke, but when once his lips were opened it was as if Jove thundered. For him alone the applause was universal silence; the people wept but found no answer.

Of all this, though its echo was ever in my ears, I as yet knew nothing clearly, for our doors were



kept shut as tightly as the city gates. Many times I crept through the long, dim passage leading outward, and pushed with all my strength against the nail-studded panels; but they never yielded, and Trogon, the porter, was always lurking there, spiderlike in his ambush, ready to pounce out of the shadows and wrap his ugly clutches round me. Then, breaking away, for sheer weariness and misery of spirit I would weep till the tears refused to come and my eyes were hot and dry, pining for the farm and the bare earth and the open sky; for I fancied that if I could only get through the door I might find them again. I dragged at my mother's robe, begging that I might go home; but she put me off with words about the war and the Spartans until my baby soul grew desperate.

"Why doesn't my father take his horse and his spear," I cried, "and go out with the men in brass and chase them away?" For I thought that nothing could withstand my father's horse, supported by a line of shields and lances such as I had seen under the tower.

Then my grandfather called out from his great carved chair, "Well said, boy!" and applauded as if he had been listening to the orators in the assembly instead of sitting bowed in a dusky corner giving ear to the babble of a child. For he was too old now to do anything but sit and mutter.

"Yet lay no blame on your father, boy," he went on, in a voice that was like the griding of steel on a stone. "Never blame the good men of



the city, boy. For Athens, child, is ruled to-day by a tyrant — a mighty tongue, loud among leather caps, dumb before helmets. It was not so when Cimon sailed the fleet, and Greece was one, and the Persian feared to look upon the sea.” And again he fell to muttering.

Then my mother, seeing my eyes wide with wonder and fearing lest I vex the old man with questions, explained that this was Pericles whose tongue ruled Athens, and he would let none go beyond the walls except such as went out in ships; whereupon I decided that Pericles must be the sentinel at the gate — whether man or dragon I was not sure, but trembled to think that we had passed so near.

Yet I was not satisfied with my mother's gentle words, considering that she was only a woman and could not know; and soon, while she was busy with the maids at the loom, I stole back to my grandfather, and laying hold of his bony fingers to arouse him, told all that was in my heart. At first he sniffed impatiently and tried to pull away his hand, but I held so fast he let it lie; and presently, reaching out with the other, he drew me between his knees and listened. When I had finished he laughed, yet so bitterly that I saw he was not really laughing, but in earnest. And he said I had hit the truth; that Pericles was indeed a dragon, bigger than the one that Cadmus killed at Thebes; and that more armed men had come out of his mouth, so that the land was full of them. “And there will be no peace,” he cried, “till the whole dragon's brood



is slain. Twenty and seven years," he crooned — "twenty and seven years — even as the prophet warned us — beginning in pestilence, ending in famine — and then the walls shall fall and crush the last of them."

Then he fell into silence; and I crept away with my heart in the bottom of my stomach and the dragon gnawing at it. And this name, the noblest in Athens, became such a terror to me that the servants presently observed it, and used Pericles instead of Mormo for a bugbear when I vexed them. For I had ceased to tremble at Mormo and Empusa, because my father laughed at them; but I saw that he was always grave when Pericles was mentioned, and this to me was the seal of truth.

Although I had fled in dismay from before my grandfather's mantic passion, the very awe with which I now regarded him soon drew me back. At first I hung aloof and watched him from the furthest corner, thinking how much he looked like old Cronus on the picture vases, as he sat in his great chair, white and bent and heeding nothing. Yet at last the dim eyes perceived me, and a querulous voice called my name:

"Hither, little Theramenes! Of what is the son of Hagnon afraid?" And soon I was again at his knees, recklessly plying my oracle with questions.

After that we were main comrades, my grandfather and I — we were both so lonely and so helpless, and so weary of the vacant hours. I tremble



to think how completely I became a thing of this old man's making; for he opened his stores without reserve and gave me of his best and worst.

Was I too apt a pupil? Some, perhaps, would say so, in view of what came after. And the old man's blood was in my veins, though mingled with a sweeter strain, — which he esteemed a taint, for my mother was not of the pure Athenian stock, but an islander. He had forgiven her — almost — yet this was a sore spot on his calloused heart. "Speak not of that," he would mutter away down in his throat, "speak not of it, and who, but one old man, will remember? Thy metal is good; thou art thy father's son — what matters it of women?"

From him — for though not untaught, I have always looked more on brass than on books — from him and his rambling monodies I learned most of what I know of our nation's lore, both fact and fable. There were days when he would do little else but recite long passages from Homer — Iliad, Odyssey, and much besides that I have never seen in writing, nor know if it ever was written. Homer he called it all. Strange work he made of it, for his chanting was like the rhythmic discords of a brazier's hammer braying upon the shield-plates; yet the flow and swell of the verse was beyond any man's spoiling. My blood was stirred, and I, too, began to recite the lines that rang out most clarion-like. But it was not as a lesson that I recited them. Round and round the room I would



march, with measured step, to the music of those opening lines : —

Sing, O Muse, of the wrath of Peleus' son, of the deadly,  
Baleful strife that oppressed with woes untold the Achæans, —

and so on until my breath was lost in panting ; while my grandfather beat with his heels and joined in with raucous trumpeting, and my mother appeared at the door with a flutter of snowy linen, but turned away without a word. She, I think, had little liking for Homer ; but for him who would stand in the phalanx when the pæan sounds there is no other poet. Then first I became a soldier, and tasted in advance the wine of battle. When Diomed dared the gods, when Hector shattered the gates, when toiling Ajax withstood the onset at the ships and with his single lance thrust back an assaulting army, then a new fire was kindled in my soul and a great flame mounted up within me, as when a beacon is lighted on a tower ; and I longed for a breastplate and a spear, and an irresistible arm, and some mighty foeman, a very Hector, with chariot and horses and resplendent mail bearing down upon me. What boy has not found such dreams in Homer — if his blood runs scarlet ? And how many have faced the spear-points of their country's enemies the better for it !

And out of this grew my favourite play. With knitted brow and labouring breath, a pot-lid firmly braced upon my arm and the applauding veteran's staff well levelled, shield to shield with the shades



of many ancestors I charged down an imaginary hill-slope straight against the foe, and having put them to rout and rushed after in mad pursuit, plunged into imaginary waters to lay hold of the fleeing galleys — singing the while no imaginary pæan, for I had learned the right cadence even then, and the words of it, too. And that, I remember, pleased my father when at last he came in from scouting, so brown and lean from rough service that I hardly knew him, and without his horse, which had gone lame on the stones.

And now, with one more episode, this ominous old man passes from my life. It was late in the spring of the second year, and we were sitting on the house-top, my grandfather and I, basking in the clear sunshine; and very good it seemed after the long darkness of the rooms below. Before us, not far away, rose the steep crags of the Acropolis, its stern brow crowned with a flowery wreath of temples, the most splendid garden of the gods that earth could offer, — then so new that all the richness of its varied colouring shone undimmed, and even from where we saw the vision, the sculptured gods and demigods of frieze and pediment stood out to the eye like living things. From below, from among the red tiles of the city, mounted a broad stairway of whitest marble, flecked with the figures of those who came and went, leading up to the glories above through pillared pylons that were themselves great temples, more perfect than ever chisel shaped except in Athens. High over all, on the topmost terrace,



too mighty to be housed in any of her shrines, towered the mail-clad goddess of war, our protecting deity, with her massy spear so uplifted that its shadow fell afar on the roofs of the city that she loved. Its point seemed blood-stained then, but this doubtless was only the glow of sunshine on the ruddy bronze; yet her whole aspect seemed menacing and fraught with fire, and I feared while I adored her.

But soon, when I had gazed for a little while and sated my eyes with these novelties of form and colour, my thoughts wandered somewhat from the scene before me, and because I saw many people strayed back to the riot in the market, where we had once so narrowly escaped from stoning. And presently, as the old man sat silent, I began to urge him with questions, — why the people hated us so, and what was the meaning of that evil word the man had spoken; for it stuck in my heart that my father had been called an aristocrat.

But my grandfather, when he had drawn in his eyes and again gave heed to me, answered the last question first; and he spoke sharply, with a sort of petulance.

“Boy,” he cried, “that was no lie, but the truth, and wrong were you to deny it. For it is not an evil word, except in the mouths of slaves and the sons of slaves; and such are the rabble of Cleon. But not of such are you. Hear me, boy, first-born of a noble house in the foremost city of all Jove’s Hellas.”



And my heart grew big as I listened, and he was pleased to see my breath come and go.

“Strike ever for Athens, boy,” he chanted — for a new tone had come to him, and he spoke with the clang of an orator before the people — “strike, and strike sharply, for thy native land, never against her. Strike down her enemies with hand and tongue, and her betrayers by what means you may; for it matters little of the means if the end be true, and crooked paths often lead to holy places. And if in doing these things it shall come to thee to die, even by the hand of those who should have aided thy endeavour, speak a brave word, boy, and die boldly. For many among thy ancestors have died a good death for Athens. But as for Cleon and his brawlers, that would make their foul breath law and spit upon their betters, may it ever be thy wish to cast their carcasses into the barathrum to be entombed by dogs; and may Athena make strong thy arm to achieve it.” Here he was seized with a fit of coughing that stopped him for a season. But he began again: “Those whom they taunt as aristocrats,” he cried, “are but those who have possessed this city from of old, and were the best of her citizens from the beginning. By them alone were her glories won; by them alone can she be saved from present shame.”

As he paused, we noticed that the street below, which, when he began to speak, was thronged with hurrying figures, was now empty and silent. The air hung thick and dead, and through it swam a



faint odour, mawkish, like the scent of decaying lilies, so that I shrank to breathe. And with this came a dismal tremor, the *eleleu* of wailing, at first almost melodious in the distance, then throbbing painfully upon the ear as the cry drew nearer. For as we listened, gazing up and down, a sinister procession swung in view. In front were two or three hired mourners, scurrying along at a very unusual pace, and only at intervals shrilling a cry. As we watched them, the hindmost darted down an alley and disappeared. Then came the bier, borne by pallid slaves, stumbling in their haste, with the white shroud pulled awry, giving a glimpse of hideously distorted features; but none stopped to adjust it. Close behind walked a woman, her garments rent, her cheeks torn and streaming blood, yet ashen with anguish, frantically wringing her hands. Further back straggled a few more, black-robed but white with fear, nearest of kin, no doubt, but in space holding as far aloof as might be. Besides the slaves and hirelings, not a man was in sight.

The bier was now directly beneath us, and as it passed our door the woman broke forth with a shriek, the most dreadful that I had ever heard.

“Let us go down,” croaked my grandfather, in a changed voice. “It has reached our quarter, now.”



### III.

#### *The Great Pestilence*

THAT was the end. I learned no more lessons from my grandfather, whether of good or evil.

The very next day he was stricken, and the house rang with his cries for water and his curses because it brought no relief. Only by constant watching was he kept from flinging himself into the water-tanks. For in his ravings he thought himself Tantalus, up to the throat in the Tartarian Lake, — only the waters that fled from his lips were boiling hot and seethed his body; and he tried lake after lake, but all were hot. Then he was Sisyphus toiling on the Stygian mount, rolling up the accursed stone that ever escaped him near the summit, — only the stone was red-hot, and scorched his chest and arms and thighs as he struggled against it. Last of all he was Ixion, bound in a wheel of living fire that whirled forever in the darkness of Cocytus; and the whirling fanned the flames, and they roared and grew black and entered into his vitals and consumed him utterly, leaving only an ashy shell. And indeed, this was very near the truth; for when at last the fever left him, all was gone.



Of this they told me afterward, for then I was hurried away to the furthest chambers in the women's part, beyond the great room where the looms were standing, unused now. But it mattered little where they kept me, for the terror and the taint were everywhere; and I too was touched, though because I was but a child, with a body so fresh and dewy that it would not burn, it was the lightest touch, I think, that ever fell from that skeleton hand.

But on my grandfather this dread scourge wrought its worst, save death. Yet he survived all, the fever with its fiercest torments and then the wasting marasmus, and lived on for many years; but he lived not otherwise than an ancient tree-trunk lives, gnarled, bent, and leafless, without sense or motion, only not quite dry and dead. Much better had he died with the rest. He no longer saw or heard anything, nor ever stirred from his chair; even his rasping tongue lay silent in its ill-closed vault. The very food was pressed against his lips; then his jaws flew open and he ate. I never again so much as touched his hand, not even with my finger-tips. He had become a horror to me. The whole man was a sepulchre, ghost-haunted.

The next that was seized in our house was the woman who had once been my nurse; and she died screaming on the ninth day. Out of this grew an ugly incident. They gave less heed to me now, for they deemed me exempt, and indeed, a favourite of the gods; so I went about unwatched. Soon I



perceived that the servants were utterly panic-stricken; something there was that they dreaded more even than the plague. Not one of them would go into the weaving-room, nor approach its door, — especially after nightfall; and at last I drew it out of them that the ghost of the woman came there. Three separate times they had seen her, standing beside her loom in some frightful guise of which they would not tell me anything, but in some sort shrouded, waving her arms and banning. Thrice, they said, she had banned all in the house; and their lips went the colour of clay.

Two nights later, in the long passage leading to the women's quarters — did I too meet her? I know not, — neither what it was nor how to describe it. I saw nothing, but something there was in that darkness, — a thing full of misery and fury, most like to a disincarnate curse, uttering itself without lips, impotent against my body, yet floating close, nay, reaching out after me as I fled on weak knees to the lighted hall.

There I found my father — for he was not campaigning now — and in my terror I told him all, both what the maids had said, and this. Then was my father angry in a way that was good to see. He called before him all the servants, men and maids; and they came in haste and stood in fear as he questioned them.

“Which one of you buried this woman?” he asked them.



It was Tribon that answered, "I, master, with Manes."

"You buried her?" And Tribon quaked, but did not answer.

"Who among you saw the spirit in the weaving-room?"

Three maids fell on their knees before him: "We, my lord, but —" and their voices sunk away beneath his eye.

"How was this spirit garbed?"

"Still in her shroud, my lord, that we put about her. That is, in a way, my lord; but the shroud was foully torn and stained with filth."

"And she — was all there?"

"O master, not all!" And their teeth were chattering as they answered. "The face — it was but a shadow, my lord; nay, not all was there."

Then my father's eyes blazed like a dooming god's as he turned upon the men.

"Curs," he cried, "of the carrion breed, ye have cast out this woman unburied to your like!"

And they answered gasping, as they grovelled on the ground: "We were afraid, my lord — we were afraid; and she was but a slave, as we."

"And fear ye nothing now? Take what is needful," he cried, in a voice that thundered through the house, "and search her out, where ye have left her, and bury her as best ye may. Then back to your scourging."

And they crept away and obeyed him, even to the coming back for the scourging; for they feared him



more than pestilence or spirit when his wrath was full, and their hearts became like water. But before the month was out they both were dead. And the maids, too, died, all three within the year.

Somehow, after that, my father seemed nearer to me, and it was to him that I came with my hardest questions. And they were indeed hard questions that I asked him. For so many dying and the fear and gloom that were all about us moved me to much pondering on the hereafter; and I puzzled myself greatly, as others have done. At last, after long waiting, one evening when my father sat beside my mother near the hearth, I clasped his knees and let flow my troubles, entreating him to tell me all the truth. I noticed that he first glanced sidewise toward my mother, who sat with her busy hands at rest, folded upon her lap, her face sad enough — for none could be merry unless they were glutted with wine — but with lips so sweet and eyes so full of gentleness under their drooping lashes, that I then began to realise that my mother was beautiful beyond the rest, and my father loved her. But he turned again quickly and answered me as plainly as he might, though a keen note of impatience sounded in his voice and he was ill at ease. For I had asked him what became of those who died, and why our servant had come back to the house to curse us.

“Why ask these things,” he cried, “which none can know and none can answer? Whether the dead are anything, or if anything have any longer memory



and sense, who but the gods can tell thee? To me the dead often seem but clay and bone, their life but a flame that is quenched, and these phantoms no more than shadows, sent up, perhaps, from the caverns of the world below to augment our ills. This ghost, as they call it, was more likely but some malignant sprite — for the city, doubtless, is now full of them — which took advantage of the negligence of those sacrilegious hounds, who have now paid their forfeit, to assume the aspect of thy mother's maid to vex us. Such is my present judgment," said he; "but whether these rites of burial truly serve the dead, as most men hold, or whether they serve them not, as being beyond all service, they at least prevent these ill happenings of ghosts and apparitions. And for this, or perchance for that other reason, the gods themselves have imposed those rites," he concluded.

Not all of this could I follow with full comprehension, but the main purport was clear. "And is there truly no three-headed dog," I cried, "and no ferryman with his boat, and is it not for him that the obol is put in one's mouth? And do not the wise and good, who were just in their lives on earth, ever dance in those fields of Elysium, and are not the souls of perjurers sunk in the mud?" The tears gushed in my eyes, and my mother too looked troubled.

"Come, come!" said my father, more lightly. "I would not spoil your toys, child, not one; but you adjured me so solemnly to speak true that I



gave you what was topmost in my heart. Nor have I said that any of these tales are lies, not I, but only that I am less sure of some of them than when I used to lay my ear upon the ground to hear Cerberus roaring. As I told you, the great majority of men believe that we still live, so to say, when we are dead, and that not the gods only are immortal, but we too, after a fashion, so as still to know something of joy and pain. Yet that death is a thing to be wishful of I have never heard, unless for those to whom life has become but a bane; and I would have thee make good use of thy sunshine while thou hast it, for that death-life yonder would seem to be as scanty lighted as it is scanty known. 'Tis a thin life at best, I fear, much like to dreaming, and I make little of beings too shadowy to bear the weight of armour. Yet myriads have believed in this, and from the oldest times, when the gods, they say, spoke clearer than Apollo's oracle nowadays; and quite likely I am wrong in ever doubting. For it seems impossible that all have been deceived, and that, too, in the wisest ages, and that none ever found it out until now. No jury in Athens would allow that on any man's argument. But if this is your wish, to hear what the poets have told us, and not the reasonings of the philosophers, I could tell you that, doubtless, — though most of it, I think, you know already. 'Tis at least a pretty story; but your mother, child," and again he glanced that way, "your mother can tell it much better than I, that am a soldier of many battles, and have slain



so many men with sword and spear that I am slow of belief that they are yet alive. Let her tell it, and I too will listen."

Then my mother, after a little silence, lifted her eyes, that shone like the pole star in the wet sky, when the mists are melting on the sea.

"It is not for me, my lord, to set my reasons against thine," she said; and again her eyelids drooped under his gaze. "And yet, my lord, may not the same melody which has died upon the harp-strings again be sounded? And though the harp itself be broken, and its idle fragments burned to ashes, may not the same melody be sounded on new strings by him who knows its harmonies? And do not the gods know all the music of our souls?"

"And do not the dead still live in memory, my lord, and most of all wake when we sleep, and walk before our eyes in dreams, and speak to us, so that we know their voices, just as of old? And how could these things be, if the dead were altogether nothing? And who would refrain from crime, or who would endure to live in all these troubles, if death were indeed the end of all, and nothing more ever came of virtue, and nothing more of wrong?"

"And you, my lord, would you not weep thrice as much when I too am dead, if no spirit lingered in your house, and I never came again to soothe your sorrow, not even in the airy substance of a dream?"

And as my father listened to the music of her voice, yet answered nothing, a tear hung in the middle of his cheek, and he left it there.



“But this, my lord, is not the tale you asked for, that I have often told, and will tell again. For I love the tale that tells how the dead are not truly dead but live; and my own mother sang me parts of it in far-off Ceos, when I was still so little that I nestled in her arms. Whether every single word is true I do not know,” she said, “but I do know that it is truer than the strange, unhappy teachings of those philosophers.”

And she fondled my face as she looked back at my father, with eyes full lifted now. For I had slipped from his knees and climbed upon her lap; and her words had a new weight for me when I saw my father listening.

“First,” she said, “I must tell you something of this great world that is all around us, how it is fashioned. It is vaster than you can think, and the sunny earth, on which we live, is but a little part of it, floating in the middle of space, borne up by some sort of necessity; for necessity, they say, is the power that makes things as they are.”

“But Atlas” — interrupted my father — “how about Atlas? Or have you gone over to the philosophers already?”

“About Atlas,” she answered, “I admit that I do not well understand, — unless he be but another name for that necessity, upholding all. Let him pass, then, as one of those fictions of the poets of which you so often remind me. For they say that he stands in the deeps, with his feet in the bottom of the void, and upholds both earth and heaven upon



his shoulders; but I cannot persuade myself that any real being is so monstrous. Jove himself would be less — much less — so that his thunderbolts would be like little pebbles thrown by a child against a man in armour.”

Well am I answered, though from woman’s lips it fell, quoted my father, smiling; “and no philosopher could expound it better. For if Atlas is but a mythic saying for necessity, he is indeed greater than Jove; for it is conceded by the wisest that Jove himself bows to necessity.”

“But the void,” I cried, “where is it?” For all this about necessity and the philosophers was a weariness to me; and I could see no reason why Atlas should not bear his load, when Hercules, who was not as big, had once borne it for him while he went for the apples.

“The void,” said my mother, winding her arms about me, “is the vast abyss called Tartarus, quite beneath the earth.” And she drew me closer, for this was terrible even to think of. “It is so deep that if a stone should fall down all day, when evening came it would still be falling, far from the bottom; only there is never any evening there, but night always, and it is darker than anything we know. And in that darkness, in its very lowest regions, lie all things that are too evil ever to come upon the earth; and the Titans have been cast down there, and the giants that would have wrecked both earth and sky; and into that same place, I am sure, will go



at last this dreadful plague, which is more than earth can bear."

"May thy word be a prophecy!" breathed my father.

"Nay," said my mother, sadly, "it will not go until its appointed work is done. But there is something else which seems to me most terrible of all. For those seers that can read the secrets of the gods and have spent their lives interpreting the oracles of Orpheus, — those hoary, holy devotees who dwell in solitudes until they hear the voices of things that speak not, and see the things that are not yet, and the things that are forbidden" — she paused.

"Speak," commanded my father.

"They have uttered a warning so awful that it almost stopped my heart." Her face was alabaster, and her arms were weak around me. "For they say — if those ancient oracles be true — that even the souls of men, should any become so evil that no good can ever reach them, they too are cast down at last into the same black gulf, to lie in that darkness always with those accursed things that writhe and creep and flutter there."

Then my mother so shut her arms about me that I was in pain, and my father breathed hard.

"Woman" — and he spoke with something of that sternness which made many fear him — "these are new doctrines, and to me they have little savour of gods' temples or of the teachings of my youth. Nor did I suspect that my wife was an initiate, deep



versed in hidden and dubious mysteries, — which, if known, are best untold.”

My mother’s cheeks, as she bent to kiss me, were like the faint coals now sinking in ashes on the hearth; for the room had darkened, and the shadows were creeping toward us from every corner. Her voice had choked, and it faltered a little when she spoke.

“My lord,” she answered, humbly, “I began those words thoughtless of where they led, and would gladly have left them unuttered, for they fill my soul with terror. Yet you bade me speak, and your word is my law.”

My father said not a word, at first, but beckoned to the waiting slave to lay on fresh coals and blow them to redness. And then —

“Tell on thy tale, sweet wife,” he said, “nor mind the quick speech of one who deals with men and must ever smite them with his tongue. Tell thy tale to the end; but leave yonder crazed mystics to mumble their ill words in their unkempt beards. Whether their lore be holy or unholy, it suits not thee, nor pleases me. Think not of them.”

And my mother, with a little catch, as if this were not so easy, began again as she was bid.

“Let us leave the dark gulf,” she said, “for the light of the sun never visits it, and I trust no soul of man was ever there. Let us rather climb up into heaven, which the gods have made their dwelling-place and where all is good and pure. Yet this too is a long way off, though it looks so near; for the



heavens are lifted as high above us as that abode of evil things is sunk below. And if thy father should shoot an arrow against the sky, and it should fly on swiftly all day long, never falling back, the evening would find that arrow still speeding upward and far below the dome of heaven; yet the gods are able to traverse all that space in a moment of time. And the crown of this dome of the sky is truly the summit of Olympus; though doubtless the mountain that leads through the clouds is the easiest way to reach it. But whence else than from the loftiest summit of the sky could the gods see all that men are doing, both good and bad, over all the earth? And there, upon a throne of snowy clouds, sits Jove himself, as radiant as the sun; and all around him dwell the other gods in golden houses, like the moon and stars. And even when Jove has gathered the dusky storm-clouds and spread them out like a curtain under the vault of the sky, and the earth is shadowed by them, the region above is still fair and shining. For the ether is not like the air that blows about the earth, heavy with fogs and rain and foul with dust, and so often tainted with these deadly vapours, but a purer element, instinct with light like the flowing sunshine. And indeed, they say that the sunshine itself is but the ether shooting downward from the sky and mingling in the air, so that men can breathe it; and that where there is light there is life, and where there is no light there is only death; but because on the earth there is both light and darkness, here is both life and death. And



in that high place of the heavens, if we could reach it, we should find no souls of the dead, not even the spirits of the wise and good whom the gods have loved. For only the gods can live in the bright, thin ether, which is like a flame to the shades of mortals and would burn them to nothingness, as the sun burns up the mists. No shade could exist for an instant in that region of all-pervading light; and even upon the earth no ghost is ever seen in the sunshine, but they hide themselves in graves and ruined houses, and lurk in shadowy forests and all manner of gloomy places, and walk only at night; and soon they fly away to the part where sunlight never comes."

"And where is that, dear mother?" I asked, expectant; for now I felt that we were coming to familiar places.

"In the land that lies beyond the golden sunset," she answered me — and her voice was still and dreamy, like a whispering of the wind — "so far away that all the nations of living men lie between, and mountains, and deserts, and wild forests, and raging torrents. Even when one has crossed the tides of ocean, whose slow stream circles round the earth we know, he is only in the twilight-land where all is rosy or golden, and the weary shades who are seeking the shadow-country still have far to go. But at last they reach a dim region that is the outer edge of darkness, and there is the river Styx, and Charon and his boat, of which you know."

"Yes," I cried, "I know about that."



“And there a great multitude of souls are ever gathered, and they hover along the shore like a pale, wavering mist; for there is still a little light in their substance because they are so lately dead. And some, who have been rightly dealt with by their kindred, whose souls have been sweetened by the holy rites of burial and purged of all infections of the flesh by the dust or the fire, — these, when they have given up to him that obol, the last token that is left them of the world of men, he takes over gladly. But if they will not yet give him the obol, he turns them back; and he drives away also those who have not been rightly buried, about whom lingers some taint of the flesh. And these wander on the winds for many years, ever sighing and moaning; and sometimes they come back to haunt and trouble the living, and especially to punish those who have neglected them. Such a spirit, as I believe thy father also thinks in his heart, was she who affrighted thee in the passage, yet could not harm thee because it was not from thee that she had suffered wrong. But at last even these pass over too, when their bones are white and all is sweetened by the lapse of time.”

“This, in good truth, is as I learned it,” said my father.

“But how,” cried I, “about those who were evil in their lives?”

“They,” said my mother, “at least, if they were very bad indeed, soon find that they can go no further. For those who were guilty of any horrid sacrilege, or of perjury, or of treason against their



country and its gods, are so heavily weighted by these crimes that they sink in a deep morass which stretches along the further shore, some sinking only to the neck, but others deep down in the slimy mud; and there they lie in misery and filth for a myriad of years, as some say."

"That, indeed, seems but just," said my father.

"What ever becomes of them at last I do not know" — and she shuddered. "But the rest are able to cross the marsh, some not without a struggle, but some more lightly, and those who were really good without so much as soiling their feet. Thence they pass on by winding paths, over dreary plains where nothing grows but the asphodel, and through cavernous places, amid precipices and dreadful chasms; and here some that were not well instructed of the way fall behind and lose themselves and wander long; but the light of the funeral pyre and the prayers of friends are a help to them. But the rest, and they too in time, come finally to the region where the gods of darkness dwell and reign forever. And here a great gate rises, and beside it sits Minos, who will not let all pass in at once; so that many wait long in the outer darkness, while the fruit of their deeds is ripening on the earth; and of these some go back to the wilderness, but some at length enter in. And within is light, not of the sun, but soft and sweet, so that it harms them not though they are only shadows. And there they ever dance and sing, with what joy they may, through all the



ages; or if there be anything else that comes after, I know not what it is."

She ended, sighing. My father sprang to his feet.

"May they long dance their dances without thee, wife of my heart! The coals are black on the hearth; it is midnight, and as dark as the paths of this heavy-hearted tale. Let us have done."

Then a servant came, and with a lamp that flickered through the draughty hall, as if it fought with the shadows, led us to the inner chambers.

I am glad that I listened so intently to my mother's words that night. I am glad that I left my father's knee to climb upon her lap, and bore so patiently with her caresses. They were the last. For she too was stricken — my mother. She too — with all that fiery anguish — until, like the fragrance of a wasted flower, her soul was wafted whither she herself had told us. So, at least, I had been ready to believe; but my faith died when I saw her suffer. It came into my mind that Jove, perhaps, was dead, and all those evil things in Tartarus had climbed up into heaven. Anyhow, the gods were of no avail in that affliction. It is too much. I cannot talk of it. Anything else but that.



#### IV.

##### *From a House of Slaves*

AFTER my mother's funeral, when all was finished, and he had cried the last farewells in a voice that was dry with unslaked pain, my father sat bowed in the darkest corner two whole days, never moving, his face like a slab of marble. The servants came and went without a sound, lest he break out upon them; yet he scarcely seemed more alive than that other who hung senseless in his great chair by the inner door, neither grieving that any were dead nor rejoicing that he himself had breath. But on the third morning, as the darkness drifted from the sky and the window in the roof became a pale circle of light, my father started up suddenly and went out, taking Pistias. A few days later we learned that he had sailed for Thrace; for that was where the best fighting was then.

Yet he had not forgotten me — not altogether — though he spoke no word. Before embarking he had bought six new slaves, which he sent back to the house, — one of them, a Syracusan, well instructed in music and letters, who was to be my tutor. That, however, proved an ill venture, for I hated this fel-



low from the beginning. He declared that Homer was too deep and too full of hidden meanings for a child, and set me to learn long, dull passages from Theognis and Solon. So I sat on the floor at his feet, reciting in weary singsong:—

Heaven to the unjust oft doth allow long years of abundance  
While to the just, harsh want seems to deride true worth;  
Yet will I ne'er choose wealth unjustly attained —

But here I broke off impatiently. “Then are the just men fools,” I cried, “and the gods themselves love the unjust better, if they are clever.”

And he told me that if I said such things as that Mormo would get me; and that some day I would surely lie in the mud by Styx. And I scorned him to his face.

Then he turned to whining, and said that little boys should respect their elders even if they had been so unfortunate as to be sold from their native country and to lose their liberty; for his soul, he said, was free. And to this I answered nothing, but I thought in my heart that his very soul was the soul of a slave.

At last I rebelled outright; and he, with a cold sweat shining on his face, lifted his stick as if he would strike me. Then it was that my hand flew to my bosom, and I made after him with my knife while he fled among the women; but when they held out their robes against me for a shield, as if I had been a little dog with his teeth snapping, I laughed and put back the knife. After that he dared set



me no more tasks. Except when I bade him help me with the phorminx, which I rather liked, there were no more lessons. As for the flute, I would none of it, like Alcibiades, though I had not yet heard of him.

But I soon perceived that things were going much amiss. The Syracusan, who had been appointed by my father to act as steward, could control the rest no more than me. The servants had become very disorderly and even insolent; I was little regarded by most of the household, and it was only by fierce insistence that I could get any service rendered. Yet a few were not wholly unfaithful, the best being Trogon. He too would have his pleasure, but he held to his duty and beat the others into a sort of subjection, for his boar-spear was a thing to be feared, and his hand was heavy even when he reeked with wine. I often sat beside him when his speech was thick, but he never forgot that I was his master's son. I liked him well, and it was a further bond between us that we both hated the Syracusan.

I decided, after a time, to flee from the house; I could not suffer the insolence and neglect of slaves. Like Telemachus, I would go forth and seek my father. But Trogon stood in my path. Trogon was ever by the bolted door.

How I should find my father I had little idea. I would go to the harbour and ask for a ship with twenty good rowers. Perhaps Athena herself would help me, as she had aided the son of Odysseus, when she saw that I too was brave and good. Anyhow,



my father must be told that the servants were grown riotous and were robbing him, and that the Syracusan was worst of all.

So I set myself busily to find a device to beguile Trogon, but for a long while nothing came of it. First I took him strong wine, breaking open the choicest jars which the servants had not yet dared to touch. He drank greedily all I brought, but kept his post when he could hardly keep his legs; the lightest rattle at the door would start him up. Even when I raised a false alarm of thieves and ran through the house screaming, he was not deceived, but brayed with laughter at the fright of the maids. "By the hound," he cried, "'tis better than Empusa. The little master has paid them back with a cow and a calf." I was amusing myself by scaring them, he thought, and chuckled mightily in his drink at the wit of it.

Then I tried to get him to let me keep the door a little while.

"Not me," he said. "I'd go 'drunker'n a Macedonian, once I was free of the door. And what would the master say if he came unexpected, which is the way he has, and finds me snorting like the guggle of a wine-sack somewhere down amongst the jugs, a good three days from knowing what's my own name? He'd hang me up, the master would, and send for Strephon, the body-twister."

"What else will he do when I tell him? For I shall tell" — and the tears of anger started in my eyes.



“No, no,” he wheedled, “not you. It isn’t the little master that would make trouble for Trogon and wants to hear his bones crack — poor old Trogon that loves him, and keeps the door so good and tight, and drives off the thieves.”

I promised very sincerely that I would speak only of his faithful service; the others I would denounce. Something in my tone appeared to sober him. The leer slid from his face as he laid his hand upon my shoulder and whispered, hoarsely: “Tell your father when he comes, little master, and let their backs be flayed; but make no threats before them now. The Syracusan will be afraid; he too has a knife, and his heart is craven. Like the snakes, he will wriggle away when the holes are open; but his cheeks are full of poison, and when he is fretted with fear he will strike.”

These words startled me, for I felt that they were spoken from the Delphic tripod; but they only confirmed my resolve to run away. I was grateful to Trogon, but I ceased pouring wine upon this door-stone, or praying to it. I looked about me for a lever. And in the end, with a lie about the Syracusan and Lyssa, a slave-girl whom he loved, I did beguile him. He surged to his feet, lurched a moment, steadying himself upon the boar-spear, then ran out like a wounded horse, reeling but swift.

At last the great door of the world stood before me unguarded. In an instant I had climbed on a stool and the bolts were sliding. A cry rang from within; I strained against the creaking valves, and



as they parted sprang through and fled down the street. I laughed as I ran, for I could still hear Trogon's curses and the cries of the Syracusan and the women. There was no pursuit, yet I doubled like a hare, darting down the first alley, swerving to left or right wherever I saw an opening, until my breath was quite spent. I found myself in a close, so filthy that my bare feet slipped in the slime and I fell on a heap of garbage, from which I looked up in surprise to see the cliffs and glimmering marbles of the Acropolis just above me. It was a noisome hole, yet I would not turn back, but squeezed out by an angle between the houses, and struggled on through a tangle of walls and open spaces full of rubbish; and this brought me to the edge of a large enclosure across which I saw colonnades and what I took for an immense stairway, with steps that ranged far up the slope in widening curves. I remember thinking that it looked like a great white mussel-shell leaning against the hillside, for its gleaming concave lay almost iridescent in the sun. Had I known that this was the city theatre, where the choruses danced and tragedies were acted in the festival season, I might have ventured nearer; but I feared the open spaces and skirted along the edge, then followed a winding lane almost under the shadow of the rocks.

Thus far I had met few people, and none had attempted to interfere. At first some had halted to gaze after me, and their eyes had lashed me to swifter flight; when I ceased running the staring ceased, and I passed on unnoticed. But here the



street seemed empty from end to end; nothing was visible except mud-coloured walls quickly bending to an illusive close which fled before me like the curtains of a fog, — with tight-shut doors at uncertain intervals, and above them little black windows in a wavering line. At first there were some signs of life: a sudden discharge of slops from a window splashed at my feet; a door flapped in my face, and a dog ran out howling, chased by a hollow curse. He soon lay down, twisting about like a worm, yelping and snapping so that I feared to pass him; others I saw lying dead. Plainly this was a district where the plague was still raging. As I went on the houses grew more and more like tombs, as doubtless many were, though the groans that issued from others showed they were not yet wholly that. Only once did I see a face at a window. The doors were no longer shut; some waved in the wind and others were broken in. The light was fast failing, and these black holes filled me with terror, but I hurried on, until presently I reached a small square with a fountain and a pool. Here were more dead dogs, stretched in every posture, mostly gathered about the pool; the odour was like that which blows from the barathrum. Among them lay two other shapes, face downward. My courage broke with a snap; I fled in a whirl of terror, and all at once found myself in a street where voices were heard, and men stood upright and walked about.

My terror melted and flowed away in a gush of tears. I leaned against a Hermes-post, and the tears



still dripped from my eyes because I was so tired and hungry. But this was a mistake; it drew attention to my loneliness.

“A boy, Pardocas! yes — a fine boy, Pardocas! Why do you cry, little Greek?”



V.

*Peril and Rescue*

THE voice that sounded in my ear was most unpleasant; it came out with a hiss and a wriggle, as if a snake had spoken. I looked up and saw the hawkish beak and carrion face of an old Phœnician. He was bending over me. Beside him stood a huge Nubian, bearing a lamp which glimmered faintly through a section of horn. I turned away from this nightmare without a word. But they followed me.

“Why does the brave little man stand in the street crying? See, Pardocas, it is fine linen, though soiled.”

I felt for my knife, but it was gone. “I was hungry,” I answered, shortly.

“The pretty little master has perhaps lost his friends. Yes — and perhaps the good merchant will find them for him — perhaps he will. But the little lad must have food. We will take him with us, Pardocas; but first he will tell us his father’s name.”

“I am the son of Hagnon.” I announced it boldly, for I thought they would fear my father.



“Ah! yes — a knight. I think it will be a ransom, Pardocas, and we shall not need — no, a ransom is much the better. Not even the Great King will spend gold upon his fancy as a father for a son like this. 'Tis the heir of a noble house; he speaks true, Pardocas. See, the feet are tender, and the face is like their chiselled stone, and the eyes flash in thy lamp like the wetted amethyst. Pharnacas would bid high — and when he came from the hands of Scebylas who would know him? Once garbed as a slave — a young Lydian, Pardocas, with ringed ears and plaited hair and the spirit quenched — but the other is better. Oh, yes! Hagnon is not so rich as Nicias — but it is well to be moderate. Hagnon shall owe me gratitude. His hand is open, but he is shrewd; he is full of suspicions, and his hate — it is like a black Erinnyes from yonder cavern. I would not have Hagnon surmise evil of me. And already these prying sycophants — it shall be a ransom. Come, boy. We lose time, Pardocas; there are revellers abroad. Come, come: the little master must go with the kind merchant, who will give him food — yes — and take him to his father.”

I had followed his words with fuller comprehension than he thought, yet stood fast, sick with fear, like a fluttering bird while the serpent sways in his coil and delays to strike.

“Quick, Pardocas! He will raise a tumult.”

His yellow claw had fastened upon my arm, and my voice was loosed in shrieks. The Nubian reached for my throat, but I wrenched away before he could



clutch it, and fell over the feet of a stranger who stood in the circle of light; while the gloom beyond was crowded with dusky figures, that whitened into a ring of faces as they approached the lamp. I clasped the knees of my rescuer — for I never doubted that he would save me — and looked up. What I saw was like a picture that shines from the darkness in a dream, — the face of a young Dionysus, flushed with excess of wine, languid with sated pleasures, but in all its features the most beautiful that I have ever seen mounted on the shoulders of lusty manhood. His fingers rested lightly on my head and toyed with my hair. His words fell with a lazy lisp:

“Dog! Would you kidnap a free-born child in the open street? Hence, dock-rat, to your hole by the harbour.”

“It is my slave. Will you rob me of my slave?” screamed the Syrian.

“I will, indeed; and if you insist I’ll record his manumission on your hide,” said the young man, carelessly. A loud laugh went round the ring.

“But I am not a slave,” I cried. “I am the son of Hagnon.”

The fair face darkened. “Hagnon! He was with us in Thrace. A brave knight. And this beast of Baal — ”

“Kill him,” called a voice from behind. “Yes, kill him — he has my name on his tablets,” laughed another. Then others, “Trample him — at least let us trample him, Alcibiades.” And the ring of faces



swayed and grew smaller. The eyes of the Nubian rolled uneasily; the Syrian grovelled.

"Had I known it was thou — but I knew thee not, noble master — no, nor him — and I have had losses. Ah! spare — an old man — one that has paid impositions and liturgies — so many — yes, freely paid." And he gurgled with fear.

But Alcibiades — for it was he — smote him one blow across the face, then flung away his stick. He spoke with a sort of hot-blooded indifference.

"The banquet waits, and more of this will turn my stomach. Begone, or we shall stain our sandals foully with thy slime."

The Syrian wheeled like a weasel and broke from the circle, not without buffets. The Nubian passed unstruck; the lamp he carried flung him back in monstrous shadow, then gleamed a moment far down the street, and vanished. Again I looked up at Alcibiades, but his face was dim against the starry sky. I groped for his hand, found it, and clung fast.

"Well, little suppliant?" he said.

The world had been something of a disappointment thus far, but my thoughts were moving swiftly. "Did Athena send you to me," I asked him, "or are you too one of them?"

He laughed like a chime of cymbals and lifted me up. "Do you hear that, flatterers?" he cried. "The son of Hagnon has outshot you all; and he meant no flattery either, but spoke with mother's milk upon his tongue."



"If Alcibiades would pose as a god," said one, loudly, "I will set up his image —"

"And pose as a fool. No, quail-catcher, thou shalt still worship me with libations — poured down thy hot gullet. Child," he said, "it is Jove's truth; Athena loves thee. I met my sister the goddess but now, by the door of the Parthenon, and she bade me seek the little Telemachus who was crying to her. So I leaped down and stood beside thee."

The rest were choking with laughter.

"Do not mind them," he continued, in a soft, sweet drawl that I knew was half affectation. "They are my devotees; they pray to no other. I grant few of their prayers, but permit them to follow me and share my pleasures. It is for their sake that I merely walk. They are not all divine; the best of them are but fauns and satyrs, and you need not worship them."

"No: only thee," I said, and hugged his neck.

Again the mirth crowed from their throats; he too laughed, but not harshly.

"The young god accepts thy love," he murmured, lisping close to my ear, yet so that all could hear him, "and he bears thee to a banquet where thou shalt drink nectar from his own cup; thou shalt sip from the very spot his lips have pressed. The rest will get nothing but wine. They will hate thee out of jealousy, but they shall not harm thee."

We soon stopped at a house where lights twinkled and all was astir. As soon as I was set down in the vestibule I was taken in charge by two servants,



who bathed and dressed me with a deft gentleness to which I had long been unaccustomed. Then they wreathed my head and my breast with garlands, and so led me to the banquet-hall. The room was unlike any in my father's house, — a square corridor, the centre open to the sky, with a line of columns wound with flowers. Around this ran long tables, set with silver plate and strange but savoury viands, bordered with couches on which at least a score of guests were reclining, all richly robed and with garlands like my own. They turned toward me as I entered and broke out with loud applause, so that I cast down my eyes, more abashed than I ever had felt before. But the servant led me straight to Alcibiades and set me beside him on the couch; whereat there was more applause and much jesting, especially when I looked up shyly at my companion and could scarcely withdraw my gaze. But indeed I was not the only one, that night, who seemed willing to believe that the pure ichor of heaven flowed in his veins. He himself behaved as if he partly believed it, but did not care. The rest were ready to drag all the gods from their pedestals to flatter him.

“Our Alcibiades cannot justly claim his inheritance,” said one, “since his true father is a citizen of Olympus.”

“You cannot deny that Dionysus is a good Athenian,” he retorted, “since he sits with the magistrates in the theatre and gathers in taxes like old Father Demus. But give us no more of these choice selections from the sophists.”



"Let him but mount the bema and Father Demus will become his slave," said another, "for the face of Alcibiades is more eloquent than the tongue of Pericles."

"Far more eloquent at present," he assented, "for the tongue of Pericles is gagged with Charon's obol."

I could not help starting at the name of Pericles, and he noted it. "Perhaps," he said, "you do not love Pericles overmuch, little aristocrat. But speak no ill of him now. He is my kinsman; and he is dead. He could not persuade the plague."

"And Cleon — is he dead too?" I asked, eagerly.

"Nay: one plague does not eat another."

"I am glad," I cried; for in spite of my grandfather's anger I still thought kindly of Cleon. "He is big and strong, and makes them do as he says. He too lifted me in his arms and would not let them hurt me."

The young man's look was like the taste of bitter honey.

"Am I, then, yoked with Cleon? I had thought to lead him with a silver chain — and this rosy garland links us!"

"Fling it away, Alcibiades, if it smells of the tan-yard," suggested one who lay near. "All gardens bloom for thee."

"Thy face blooms redly, Antipholus," he answered, quickly, "but if I pluck anything there it will be thy nose. There are many gardens — that is true enough; but they are mostly watered with old



Chian and smell of stale vintage. My little garland smells of dew."

I had climbed up through the roses on his breast, and put my arms about his neck. He pressed my face against his cheek. "I am Cleon's debtor," he said. "I will send him silver, — though he will wonder, and fancy that I fear him."

"My father sent him the silver," I explained.

"Thy father is wiser than a Magian; he knows the right incantation. But truly, all the gods of Athens love thee, son of Hagnon. For Cleon is one of them. Pan, let us call him; for his feet are cloven, and he goes about roaring and breeds terrors. But, faugh! wash Cleon from your tongue with this, and I will be your taster."

He made me drink from a golden cup — wine mingled with honey, I suppose, for it was very sweet. I was already gorged with rich food, and my eyes were thirsty for sleep. I blinked upon his shoulder and saw only flashes of glowing faces and lifted goblets, soon slipping down among the crushed roses. I struggled to keep awake, but the noise of their laughing ebbed and swelled as if a wind brought it from far; and the same wind presently wafted me through the land of shadows, and laid my dreaming spirit on my mother's knee.



## VI.

### *A New Friend in Need*

I STARTED up from the pillow of my wilted wreath with a sudden sense that I was alone.

The caressing phantom of my dream was gone; the revellers too were gone; the hall was empty. From its central opening the sheen of dawn melted down into the gloom as the white flow of a mountain stream merges in a turbid lake, and the tables lay beneath in pale confusion, like the field of a night-battle dim in the morning mist, — stained, too, with red splashes and crimson streaks of wine, that drained in a gory drip from the edges. Evidently some such fancy had appealed to my companions also, for they had piled before me a trophy of cups, twined with limp remnants of garlands. No doubt they had ended their carousal by breaking from the house on some drunken frolic such as Alcibiades often led, — thinking, if they thought at all, to find me still sleeping on their return. But this is retrospect; I understood nothing of it then, and at first felt quite abandoned. Yet I soon bethought me that it was thus that the messengers of the gods came and went always; for the more clearly I remembered all



that had happened, the more certain I felt that Alcibiades was something more than human. His face danced before my eyes like after-glimpses of the sun. Of course he would come to me again if I needed him; meanwhile it was for me to show courage and pursue my quest.

I slid to the floor and tiptoed across its cold marble, my bare feet pressing scattered fragments of the feast and broken flowers. I brushed by a curtain and groped along black passages, until at last I emerged in the vestibule, where the outer door stood ajar to the growing day. Close beside it sat a porter on a stool, leaning his back against the wall; he was nodding heavily, but I remembered Trogon and feared to pass. I stood pondering, then advanced quickly and slapped his cheek.

"Wake up," I cried. "Do you sleep at the open door while thieves are taking the master's silver?" His head flopped up with a jerk and struck the wall; I wrenched at his ear. "Thieves!" I repeated. "Within! Do you not hear?"

He stared dully at the garland on my breast. "They are gone forth," he said, pushing the door a little wider. "Turn left, if you would follow." And his eyelids drooped again. I did not stay to insist upon the thieves, but edged past him and ran out, flinging the garland from my shoulder on the threshold.

The sun was not yet risen; but Athena stood clear on her huge pedestal of shadow, with all her panoply of bronze agleam in the rosy morning. I knew



that her dusky face was toward the sea, and by that guided my steps. The street was already alive with hurrying artisans, and with these I drifted to the market, where the booths were just opening and the chatter of bargaining had begun. Thence the stream was against me for a time; but as soon as I emerged from between the hills, the towers of the wall came in view, and I presently stood in the open gateway leading to Piræus. Here a guard stopped me, dropping his spear across my path.

“Whither, child?”

“To Piræus, to meet my father,” I told him.

“Who is your father?”

“They call him — they call him Hermon,” I answered; for I had discovered that it is not permitted to a runaway always to speak the truth.

A man with an empty sack across his shoulder spat an obol from his mouth into his hand. “There is a Hermon who lives near the little harbour,” he said, — “a rich metic. Let the lad go to his father.”

“My father is a citizen,” I could not help explaining. “He has been fighting in Thrace.”

“Three triremes came in yesterday,” said the soldier, “and more are expected to-day. Well, it is a common name. But why are you alone?”

“I lost my slave in the market. But I know the way.”

He lifted his spear, and I passed on, well pleased with myself. The long channel between the walls that stretched seaward lay right before me now, narrowing almost to a point in the distance. I had not



realised that it was so far, nor that the passage was so wide; it was a long bow-shot from wall to wall. The swarms of people that I so well remembered had disappeared, and though many of the sheds set up to shelter them were still standing in crowded rows, they seemed tenantless. Indeed, when I crept behind one of them as a file of hoplites clanked by toward the city, I found the chinks so wide that I was scarcely hidden. I met no further hindrance, but my feet grew very sore before I reached the end, and my back burned and my throat was aglow with thirst; for the sun glared almost straight along the track, with hardly a shadow.

I entered the streets of Piræus unchallenged; and here the throng was such as I remembered when my father had borne me through the press,—at the thought of which I could not squeeze back my tears, for now I was jostled about so roughly that I became frightened, fearing the crush among the carts. Then it came into my breast that I might find the house where I had once been sheltered; and the recollection of the food I had eaten there filled my stomach with cravings. So, as the crowd opened, I ran on, looking at the houses, in consequence of which I was thrown down in front of a train of wagons and barely escaped by crawling into a doorway, where my heart began to come up in great sobs, for the world was going wrong again, and Athena and all the rest had forgotten me.

A woman came quickly toward me — to thrust me out, I supposed, for that was the way with people.



Her face was ugly enough — drawn and bony, pitted with scars — her dress no better than a slave's; but instead of driving me away she spoke kindly and gave me water.

“Are you not hungry, too, little one?” she asked.

I was almost afraid to say it, for I thought of the Syrian; but I did say it, and she brought me a cake of barley bread.

“My father will pay you,” I said, when I had the dry disk half-eaten. “I will tell him to send you a wagonload.” For I saw that she was very poor.

“The gods will repay,” she answered, simply. “Jove bids us help those he sends to us. And I do so love little children.”

She spoke no more about that; but I looked at the plague scars on her face and understood, even then.

I plunged into the street with new courage, and followed the line of the northern wall down to the sea. The harbour was full of bobbing corn-ships, round as the husk of a nut, and many were moored to the wharf, unlading. All around me were men in odd costumes, many jabbering words that did not sound like Greek. Some wore only a clout, and were sweating under heavy baskets, moving in circling streams between the ships and the waiting wagons; others, in motley groups, were obviously debating prices, with high-pitched voices and excited gestures. Among them passed a few officials bearing staves; but altogether I had never seen any such concourse of barbarians, and I drew off in some alarm to the higher ground behind. Thence, looking across to



the part called the Cup, I could see the waves breaking in foam against the massive piers of the ship-houses, near which a sharp-nosed war-ship lay rolling on the swell, its long side bristling like a fish-bone with a triple tier of lifted oars. Other triremes were just entering the harbour, creeping over the water with all their oars astir like the wriggling legs of a centipede. I decided at once that I would go to Thrace in a trireme, though I saw that the "twenty comrades" I had thus far counted on would not be enough. More than a hundred would be needed; but whatever the number, Athena — or Alcibiades — could readily procure them for me. After a little I would go over to the ship-houses and see what could be done, but first I would rest awhile if I could find shade. So I stole up a close among the warehouses, and curled down in a corner. I did not know that I was leaning against a slave-pen.

I must have slept until late in the afternoon. I woke with a creeping horror that bound me fast. A cold claw was on my throat. A hissing whisper dripped like poison in my ear.

"Yes — it is the little master — the son of Hagnon. He has come back to us, Pardocas."

His clutch loosened a bit, and I gasped — "Let me go! Let me go, man, or they will kill you. Oh, let me alone! I am going to Thrace. My father is there and he will give you money."

"Yes — Hagnon would give gold — much gold. We will see." He rubbed a purple welt that seamed



his yellow cheek. "Yes, the little Greek shall go over the sea — as he wishes. We will send him in a ship, Pardocas — in a beautiful round ship, with sails." He tightened his grip, chuckling through his nose, as a vulture snuffles over a carcass. "Is not the old merchant kind? And the little Greek's friends would have made mire of his body — but he forgets all that — yes — forgets. Take him up gently, Pardocas, and wind thy mantle close about his face, lest he use his voice without judgment. It is not good to cry loudly so near the sea; I have known it to cause spitting of blood, Pardocas."

As he turned toward the Nubian his fingers again relaxed, and my choked agony burst forth in a shriek: "Alcibiades! Alcibiades!!"

The hard gripe of his talons shut on my wind-pipe. "See, Pardocas: already the little fool cries to that libertine — may his ashes rest in the maw of Moloch!"

"I am not, perhaps, wise in the wisdom of Moloch; but consider, Syrian, whether it is not more likely that this favour is reserved for his worshippers."

These unexpected words, although uttered in a perfectly even tone, fell like a flight of arrows shot from ambush. The stooping Nubian sprang back; the Syrian writhed on my body and dug his talons deeper, but as he twisted his head a strong arm reached out and dragged him from my throat. I could see no more, for I lay face upward and half-blinded.



“The gods are indeed long-suffering,” the quiet voice continued, “and they wait till the cup is full; but it is not permitted you, Syrian, to take this boy.”

“Slay him, Pardocas,” hissed the broken snake.

A strange, kind, satyr-like face bent over me, and I was lifted up; I could scarcely stand, but clung in the folds of the stranger’s coarse tunic. I saw the Nubian raise a crooked knife that gleamed with the menace of murder, but the singular being who stood beneath its edge merely looked at him, showing no concern.

“Is it not better,” he said, “to live and let others live, than to kill and die under the hands of the tormentors? I try to speak within the compass of your understanding, Nubian.”

The slave’s arm dropped. “The man have devil — it is evil eye,” he cried, and slunk back.

“Indeed, it is better thus,” the calm, speculative voice went on. “The gods, who to you and to this poor Nubian seem but evil spirits, have again been kind to you, Syrian. But I will speak in words less foreign to your understanding. There are some not far distant who love me well, as I know; but they are young and not always mindful of counsel. Among them is that Alcibiades of whom the child but now made mention, who will have it that I saved his life in battle; another is a certain Chærephon who is very headstrong. Had you harmed me I fear they would not have spared you, Syrian.”

“Yes — and you did not call? What a man is this!” cried the Syrian in a tone of sheer disbelief.



Yet his jaw sunk, for there was something unaccountably convincing in the stranger's utterance.

"The tongue is a quick weapon, nimbler than the knife," he answered. "One good shout, I think, would have outrun the stroke."

He led me past them. "Strike!" whispered the master; but the slave was cowed. Yet still the Syrian rallied and called after us.

"Who are you that take from me my boy — my pretty slave? There are courts — yes, courts."

My conductor turned. "There are courts, but you will not invoke them, Syrian, — nor shall I. The reason of this, I fear, will be too hard for you; but I will tell it. You are, I believe, of all reptiles the vilest; but since the gods, for your good, have thwarted you, and little harm is done, to the gods I leave you. It would be an easy thing to bring you to punishment, here in the street or before the courts, but not otherwise than by death. I would not have that stain upon my soul. But if I should say that I would sooner die than cause the death of another — unless it were in open battle for my country — I should speak words without meaning to the ear of a Syrian. Now go! for you stand on the razor's edge of peril."

Yet even this was not enough. The rabid creature followed slowly almost to the corner of the alley, — then fled with such a chattering of the teeth that I laughed aloud with sudden relief that he was gone. But I laughed foolishly, like a woman, and could not stop; and in the midst of it came a sobbing that



hurt my swollen throat, and my legs began to wobble. And the man, seeing my plight, took me up in his arms and spoke as softly as my mother when she whispered to comfort me.

A little way off in the open stood a group of young men, so busy with talk that at first they did not see us.

“That dæmon of his has led him on an empty chase,” one was saying. “It is a folly — his only weakness.”

“Whenever he does anything quite out of reason — such as bidding us wait here by the wharves — it is the dæmon,” said another.

“You may say what you choose,” replied still another, “I would not go against its warnings for a thousand drachmas. I have had experience.”

“I care little for warnings of any sort,” drawled a languid voice. “Divine or human, it is all one to me. But by the celestial gods, I like to hear him talk. I wouldn’t live as he does for a palace in heaven, but when I listen I think I am going to. He is beyond all the sophists and all the orators. Good Uncle Pericles was a fool to him. He does look like Hephæstus in a leather apron, but he can talk like Phœbus Apollo. I tell you, I love the man,” he ended, laughing.

“Here he comes,” they shouted, “and he heard you, too, Alcibiades.”

“I make no secret of my love,” said the young man, striding forward. “But what is this? Have I a rival? Has he too taken a baby to his heart?



Gods of Olympus, it is the garland of my feast, my little runaway, the son of Hagnon!"

He demanded an explanation, which was briefly given. "And you too saved that jackal from the dance of sandals!" he cried. "A curse upon my dainty stomach and thy dainty conscience; these swine grow wanton by our squeamishness. But we shall yet send the foul beast to lie with the mud-eaters of Styx. And now give me the boy. My claim stands first."

"Hagnon's claim stands first," replied the other. "Between you and me the boy himself shall decide."

"Come, little garland," cried Alcibiades, holding out his arms. "Come again to the banquet, little Telemachus, and to-morrow you shall have ships and chariots if you so desire."

I looked in his beautiful face, and its smile was very sweet. Then I looked up at that other. The mouth was thick-lipped and wide; the nose was flat, and turned upward with flaring nostrils; the great gray eyes protruded as if they would look sidewise; the whole face was grotesque. But I could not hesitate; I clasped his neck and put my lips against his cheek as if he had been my father. "I will stay with you," I said.

Then a shout of mirth went up. "He has chosen Socrates," they cried. "And you, Alcibiades, got no kisses with all your godship."

The bright face half frowned, but only for a moment. "I own that I am beaten," he said, "but to yield to Socrates in a contest of persuasion is



no shame to my godhead. That he is also a stout spearman I have reason to know, yet with brass I might vanquish him, — for he, alas! is mortal. But when the battle is fought with the tongue his darts are winged words that sing in men's ears and strike through every shield and never miss the heart; and all know that in such a conflict neither men nor gods can stand before Socrates."

And I wondered at this, for it did not seem to me that the man had spoken much, nor with any cunning; and if they had asked me then I should have said that Alcibiades was by far the better talker, but not nearly so strong.



## VII.

### *A Walk with Socrates*

“**A**T least,” Alcibiades pleaded, “come with us to the banquet, Socrates. See, the garland is already on your breast; come, just as you are.”

Then I noticed that his feet were bare, and his one garment hung about him like a sack, travel-stained at that.

“Come, Socrates,” the wheedling voice persisted, more earnest than I had ever heard it, “you have shared my tent and you shall share my feast. What need of a formal invitation? You have dragged me often from my wine; I will drag you to it now. Would you have me kidnap you, as I did Agatharcus, the painter? We go to the house of Hipponicus just up the hill — the old money-bag whose face I slapped on a wager, who in sheer gratitude has offered me his daughter to wife, with ten talents dowry. She is really good — would you not advise me to take her, Socrates, in spite of the dowry? And he has a new sophist, fresh imported to teach all the parts of wisdom to his young Callias — who needs it. Oh, come! The sophist will be such sport! He



will instruct you, Socrates; he teaches virtue and the art of speaking. And he will think that you fear him if you stay away."

"Do you think that there is feasting in the house of Hagnon to-night?" said the other, gravely.

"Let Hagnon wait. His proud stomach will be the better for it."

"We will try that medicine first on him who prescribes it," he retorted. "Peace, Alcibiades; it is my custom to do what I think is right. Go, and waste no words in further urging."

Then I saw plainly that somehow this barefoot man was greater than Alcibiades; for the young god obeyed him like a child.

"Where are you taking me?" I asked, when we were alone. "Will you go with me in a ship to Thrace?"

"Do you not remember," he said, "that the son of Odysseus did not find his father at Pylos nor at Sparta, but afterward found him in his own home?"

"And shall I find my father at home?" I asked, with a leaping heart.

"Whether we shall find him there to-night," he said, "I cannot be sure; but it seems not unlikely, for he landed to-day from the same ship on which I came. Good fortune," he continued, "is often like the little birds, that come hopping to the very feet of one who sits still and waits, but fly away from those who chase after them. You would have gone much astray had you sailed for Thrace. Athena is wise. Did you think she had forgotten you?"



"She sent me you," I said.

"Yes, she sent me to you," he answered, and was silent.

"But how can we know?" I asked him, after a time. "For one should not always just sit still and wait."

He drew me very close upon his shoulder. "Do you not always know what is right? Think carefully, little one; do you not always know?"

I pondered a long while. "Yes," I answered, "I do know, when I stop to remember; but how do I know?"

"You have said it. You remember."

"But when did I learn?" I cried, in astonishment.

He paused, holding me out at arm's length and looking in my face. "It is hard to explain," he said. "It is almost too hard for a child to understand; it is often too hard for grown men. But I will do what I can to make it plain to you."

We were now between the Long Walls, and the low sun cast before us far-streaming shadows and tinted the battlements of the distant city.

"Do you see those walls?" he said. "They stretch far; but you saw that they had a beginning, and you know that they have an end. For all things that have a beginning have an end. But that which has no beginning can have no end. Can you think otherwise?"

"But is there anything like that?" I cried.

"You know the meaning of what men call



‘time,’” he said. “Can you think that it had any beginning? or that it will ever have an end?”

“No; it goes on always. But time—it isn’t anything at all,” I persisted.

“Well,” he said, “you, at least, are something; for you can think and know. But can you remember when first you began to be?”

“No; I cannot remember.”

“Perhaps, then, there is something within you that had no beginning. And if that is so, it has had plenty of time to learn. Some think,” he said, “that what we call learning is really only remembering. Already you have much to remember, little son of Hagnon.”

“Yes,” I cried, harking back, “and if it had no beginning it hasn’t any end either; for you said so. My mother thought that; but she did not explain, as you do.”

“And if there is something within us that was not born and can never die, but is like time itself, can this be anything else than that part of us which thinks and knows, which men call the soul?”

“It must be that,” I said; “for they put the rest in the ground or burn it up. I never understood about the soul before.”

“And now,” said he, “which part do you think is best worth caring for,—that part which we cast away like a useless garment when it is torn by violence or grows old and worn, or that part which lives always?”



"It is foolish to ask me that; of course it is the part that doesn't die," I answered.

"I am glad," said he, "that you think this a foolish question. Yet there are many who do not understand even this; for just as some care only for clothes, some care only for their bodies. And that, perhaps, is why people do not remember all at once, but very slowly and not clearly, just as one would see things through a thick veil, such as the women sometimes wear before men. It is only when this veil, which is our flesh, is woven very light and fine, or when it has grown old and is worn very thin, that we can see anything through it plainly; and even then all that we see looks misty and does not seem real."

"Yes, but the women can peep over," I explained.

"And we, too, doubtless, can peep over sometimes," he answered, smiling. "It is better then, as you think, and I certainly think so, to seek the things that are good for the soul, which is your very self, than to seek what seems good to the body, which we keep only for a little while?"

"And that is why you wear no shoes!" I cried.

"What need have I of shoes?" he said.

Again I pondered. "What are the things that are good for the soul?" I asked him.

"There is but one thing that is good for the soul," he said. "Men call it virtue. But it is only always doing what is right."

There was a long silence after that. At last I spoke again. "But the gods," I said — "they do



not die at all. And men die; at least, a part of them dies. And I do not understand about those things that have no beginning and do not come to any end. I never saw anything like that. Tell me more about that."

He set me down in the ruddy twilight and drew a little circle in the dust. "What is that?" he asked me.

"It is the letter the Syracusan called O," I said. "And it really has no beginning and no end," I cried, clapping my hands. "I remember now. And are our souls like that?"

"I sometimes think so," he said.

"But the gods — what are they like? and why do they not die, like men?"

He looked about and picked up a dart that had fallen from a wagon. This he took by the end, and swinging on his heel traced with the point a larger circle, wide around the little one. Then he measured a handbreadth on each. "See," he said, "on the little circle even this short path is much bent, while on the larger it is almost straight."

"Yes," I cried, breathlessly; for it seemed wonderful, all the things that he knew.

"And if the circle were larger yet, the line that makes it what it is would be still straighter."

"Yes," I answered again.

"And if it were made as great as the universe, which the gods alone can compass even in thought, then its path would be altogether straight in every part, running on forever and never swerving or



turning back, like the flight of time. Such is the life of the immortals; but the lives of men move in little circles."

I drew a long breath, but made no answer. For this was greater than all that my mother had told me of. I could not even question him further, though all was vague and dim within me. Again he lifted me up and went on; and when we had gone a long way, and it was now quite dark, hugging his neck more closely, "Tell me who you are?" I said.

"You heard them speak my name," he answered. "And it may be that you have heard before of a certain Socrates, about whom some say foolish things. But what they say is not true, — neither that I am very wise nor that I am more foolish than others."

"No," I answered, "I never heard anything about you till to-day. I did not mean what is your name, but what is it that you do."

"I try to find out about the truth," he said.

"And is that all you do?"

"I try always to do what I think is right. Nothing else — unless it be something else to go about asking questions. I know that many dislike me, because I show them that they are believing lies and telling lies to others; but I know also that the gods have commanded me to live just as I do."

"The gods — those gods — they speak to you, Socrates?" I asked, with a greater awe than I had ever known.

"They speak to me," he repeated, bowing his



head so that his cheek touched mine, "and I have never willingly disobeyed that voice, nor ever shall. It would come to others if they would listen."

"It is so strange," I said, presently, "that you are not beautiful, like Alcibiades. Perhaps it is only your clothes. My father is rich, and he shall give you clothes and money."

"I have no use for thy father's money, son of Hagnon," he answered, sharply. And then he spoke softly, as if he were sorry for that one little harshness. "I take money from no one; yet the thought in your heart was kind, and for that I thank you. But perhaps I am richer than you suppose — richer even than your father. For he, I think, wants many things, and I want nothing."

"Do you mean," I asked, "that those are the richest who do not need anything?"

"Yes, that is exactly what I mean," he answered. "And as to my not taking money — not to speak of any other reasons now, though there *are* other reasons — it does not seem to me to be right for one who is richer to take from those who are poorer."

I pondered over this; for to me these were new ideas, and I had never seen anybody, unless it were my mother, who did not seem to care for money. Even those who gave it away in great purses, like my father, and those who flung it about and pretended not to care, like Alcibiades, did care and set great store by it; that I saw clearly enough. But this man did not care for it at all. Then my thoughts went back to those still stranger things that



he had said about the soul. That was the reason of his not caring, — he cared only for the soul, because that was the only thing that lasted. All the rest was to him like the things that one leaves for the slaves to use.

“Tell me,” I broke out, suddenly, “what is it that really happens when one dies?”

“I do not know,” he said. And this shocked me, for I had thought that of course he would know all about it. “But I do know this,” he went on, “that no harm can ever come to any soul that always does what is right.”

But I was sceptical now. “How can you know that,” I demanded, “when you do not know what happens?”

“Have you ever thought why it is,” he asked, “that some things are right and other things wrong?”

I had not, but I thought hard now. “It is right,” I said, “when we do what the gods want us to.”

“And if the gods should want us to do anything that is wrong, or if they should do anything wrong themselves — I do not say that they could — but would that make it right?”

“No!” I cried; for I thought bitterly of my mother, and how we had prayed for her in vain.

“Then right and wrong are something mightier than Jove himself.”

“Yes,” I answered. Again my spirit was humble, and now I knew why Alcibiades had spoken as he did. “Tell me about it, Socrates.”



"I will tell you, then, how it seems to me. To do right is to do what is truly wise. To do wrong is to make a mistake, — wilfully, perhaps, but that is because we think that we are truly wise when we are not. The gods alone are truly wise in everything, and that is why only the gods make no mistakes and never do wrong. If I say anything that you do not think is so, you must stop me."

"Don't stop," I said.

"Well, then, could any real harm come to a soul that is truly wise, and always does what is for the best and never makes mistakes — if that were possible? And it is possible, if we do not forget." He paused, but I did not speak. "And is not this the same as saying that nothing can ever harm the soul of one who does right and never does wrong, whatever may happen, now or hereafter? I do not think that we need to know just what it is that happens, little son of Hagnon."

"But there are such wicked men," I cried, "and if they catch you it isn't any use to be good."

"To be wicked," he said, "is the greatest of all mistakes. It is as if a general should think that all his friends were enemies, and all his enemies friends. A man who is wicked, like the Syrian, is sure to do terrible harm to himself; but he cannot harm any other, not even a child, like you, unless he is able to make him also wicked. And that he cannot do unless you help him; for it is not wrong to suffer what we cannot help, and no such thing ever really harms



us. No, little one, the wicked cannot hurt the good."

"But they do hurt them," I insisted.

"Let us be sure that we understand each other," he said. "I do not speak altogether of what most people call harm and talk about as good and evil, not stopping to remember, but of what is really so. I know that the Syrian thought that he could harm us and meant to do it, and that you thought the same thing and feared him greatly; but you were both mistaken. In what way could he have hurt you?"

"He hurt my throat; and he might have killed me."

"If he had run a knife through your tunic, would that have hurt your body?"

"No, not if it was just the cloth that he cut."

"And even if he had cut the ~~flesh~~ and run a sharp knife right through the body, could he have hurt that part of you which is yourself, and does not die, and is only harmed by doing wrong? No, little one: it is very terrible to think about, but the worst that he could do, without your help, would be to tear or to pluck away its garment from the soul."

"And that is why you were not afraid when the black man lifted up his knife?"

"That is why," he answered.

We were passing now near the place where Alcibiades had rescued me. There was only the light of the stars, but I remembered the very stone against which I had leaned crying.

"Why did you not let them kill the Syrian?"



I burst forth. "Oh, I wish they had killed him! And Alcibiades — he let him go, too!"

"Even Alcibiades does not always forget," he said. "Do you think it is doing right to kill people? Tell me just what you really think, son of Hagnon."

"He ought to be killed," I cried, hotly. "Oh, I wish they had trampled on him till he was spattered about like the grapes when they make them into wine!" And I gritted my teeth in sheer fury at the thought of him.

"It is true that he deserves punishment," said Socrates, so soberly that my pulses fell a little. "Do you think that he will not be punished? Is it not a frightful punishment, even now, to be just as he is, with that part of him that cannot die ruined and full of a dreadful poison? Yet if that does not seem to you to be enough, you need not fear lest that be all. Wrong always brings punishment — else it would not be wrong. That is the difference between things that are really wrong, and those things that many think are wrong which are not."

"He ought to be killed," I repeated; and the words still had a good relish.

"Men sometimes make blunders in their killing," he said; "and these, I fear, are very sad mistakes, especially for those who make them. From exile, if it is found to be unjust, a man may be recalled; but when the soul is driven out it cannot be called back. Are you sure, little boy, that you are so wise as to know always just who ought to be killed? and



how he should be killed, and by whom, and when? I myself should fear to say."

"He ought to be killed," I said again, rolling the words on my tongue, but the flavour was not so good. And I went on: "You have killed men, haven't you — in battle, Socrates?"

"I obey the laws of my country. Yes, and I would have killed the Syrian to prevent him from killing you — or bearing you away, which would have been worse — but not otherwise. And if I should say to you, little one, as I said to him, that it is better to die than to kill another, would you too think it foolish, as he did? Would you be so much like him?"

The flavour was all gone now, but I still persisted: "He ought to be killed."

Then Socrates breathed so wearily that I thought he must be tired with carrying me so far; but he did not set me down.

"Little son of Hagnon," he said, "I see that we cannot agree in this; but you are only like all the rest." He continued, but I felt that it was no longer to me that he was speaking: "Many times and in many places have I said this thing with all the skill I knew — that it is never right to do wrong, not even to those who do wrong to us — but they are all like this little child; no one of them ever understood. From words I know well that none will ever learn it; and even if one should proclaim this truth by deeds, and give up his own life before them to those who had wronged him,



and should go to his death in perfect patience, seeking only to show them the way, still how few would understand! In all Athens, I think, not one, — not my dear, slow-minded Crito, who loves me better than himself, nor this keen-witted, perilous Alcibiades, who at least loves my words, nor any other of them all; and those who knew me best would be most eager to avenge me!" He sighed. "To this, no doubt, it will come at last; and perhaps, when the appointed time is reached, those hours of death will yet speak more truth to the souls of men than all these days and years of ceaseless questioning, — to the gods I commit it. And meanwhile, not without my joy, I follow the path that lies before my feet, and obey the mandate of the god, and heed the voice that ever warns and guides me through all the windings of the way up to the gate of death."

"Why do you talk like that, Socrates?" I breathed it in his ear in that meek whisper which is nearest silence; for I wanted to get close to him again.

"I have reason to fear," said he, "that those who, like Hagnon's son, are wise in this wisdom of killing, will some day decide that I too ought to be killed, and will thereupon issue instructions to the Eleven to do what is needful for putting to silence a troublesome tongue. And the Eleven will proceed in the usual manner."

"That would be dreadful, Socrates," I cried, almost sobbing. "You shall not say it —" and I laid my hand across his lips. "But you are not in



earnest, Socrates; you are laughing. And you know what I meant. It is only people like the Syrian that ought to be killed." And in this I did not yield, not even to him, but kept saying it over and over in my heart, that the Syrian ought to be killed.

At length, as we passed through the darkness of the narrow lanes, with only a streak of black sky sprinkled with stars above us, I again opened my lips.

"The gods kill people," I said.

"Do you know that the gods kill people, little sophist? or do you just say it, not knowing at all?"

"I am not a sophist," I answered, thinking of the Syracusan. "But they sent the plague."

"Do you really know that they sent the plague? If you should thrust your hand among the red coals, would you say that the gods had burned you?" I was silent. "I think it would be more just," said he, "to say that Themistocles sent the plague, for if we had not had so many ships the plague would not have come to us; or Pericles, for if the city had not been so crowded with people by the war it would not have brought such desolation. But if the gods do kill, they at least make no mistakes."

"But they do make mistakes," I cried. "They let my mother die, when they ought to have saved her. And we all prayed so hard; and she was good."

"Some might say," he began — but stopped. "I, at least, will not say it, — for I do not think that it is true. I believe in my soul that your mother was all that you think her — as sweet and as beau-



tiful, almost, as the goddesses who dwell in heaven, and far better than some that the poets sing of. And this question, why the gods permit these things, is the hardest that any ever asked me, or can ask."

"They are cruel." And I spoke with a sense of triumph even in my grief.

"They are wise. Can you not trust something to the gods? We cannot know all their wisdom; though afterward — yet not always — we may see that what they did was best. You wished to sail to Thrace. Athena did not permit you. She was the wiser."

"That is different," I said.

He began again: "Did your mother, in her very love for you, never take anything from you that you wanted?"

"Yes: she took the spiced wine once from my very lips; and I was angry."

"And did she never refuse you anything when you begged her for it?"

"Yes: she would not let me go out through the door; and I begged her many times and cried. She was just like Athena, wasn't she?"

"But afterward you knew that she was good to you; and you would believe it now, even if you could not quite understand. And just so when the gods take from us what we very much want, and refuse what we pray for though we fall on our faces before them, we often weep bitterly and grow angry, and think that they are cruel and that we know better than they. And all the while they know best; and



they are caring for you more tenderly, if that be possible, than your own mother. And but now they have delivered you out of the hands of the Syrian, which your own mother could hardly have done; for, after all, she could not be quite so wise and good, and not nearly so strong, as the immortal gods. Can you not trust them? for it is only thus that we can be truly wise when other wisdom fails us. Can you not trust them — even when you do not understand — just as you trusted her? O little one, it is hard; it is very hard, sometimes, and almost more than we can bear, — but can you not remember to trust them always?"

"I will try to, Socrates," I said, choking. And still, beneath it all, that same thought was droning in the bottom of my heart — the Syrian ought to be killed.

And so we reached my father's house. And when Trogon, already miraculously sober, had flung open the door, he bawled out:

"The little master!"

And my father came with long strides. Yet my soul was so full of the tumult of strange thoughts that I lay in his arms like one dazed, and scarcely spoke; and I slept little that night, though I was very weary.



## VIII.

### *Schoolmates*

THE next morning I found that the Syracusan had disappeared. Pistias was again steward in his stead. Trogon's back was not without marks, but he accounted himself lucky; and when his punishment was ended he was treated with marked kindness. Most of the maids soon vanished, being replaced by others, but Lyssa was kept; for when I had told all my story she was given to Trogon, and better quarters assigned them both. Trogon got little wine now, but despite the flogging he had earned, the memory of that long debauch was a joy to him and he grunted gleefully at every mention of it. "The little master bring me wine himself," he chuckled, — "gets it out of the sealed jugs for Trogon. And Trogon get so drunk that the roof goes round like a pot-wheel all day; but old Trogon don't forget to lay across the door. The little master gets Trogon at last, though — can't anybody get the best of little master — and Trogon gets after the Syracusan and scares the women. Cha-cha-cha! And then Trogon finds the door unhapsed, and he gets so scared he drinks water. And the master comes and finds little master gone, and



Trogon gets the scorpion. Then the queer beggarman brings back the little master; and he talks to his father, and old Trogon gets Lyssa. And Trogon will eat the mud at little master's feet."

Of Socrates I saw little for a season, though my father did a few times lead me to him, always going with me himself, for he greatly disapproved of Alcibiades and some others who were always present, — he would never let me be alone with them.

"They are an evil sort," he said, "debauched and reckless, and our Athens groans with their riot. I cannot well understand why this Socrates consorts with them. He himself, I think, is no bad man, though his ways are strange. He was very kind to you, my son, and it irks me that I cannot reward him; but he will take no gifts — positively, he will accept nothing. He is the strangest fellow in Athens, and goes about dressed like a menial, though everybody says he could fill his chest with money if he would — a man of rather good family, too, though poor, of course. And really he is quite an able sophist, though he doesn't look it and doesn't teach for pay. He is very fixed about that last, as I know by trial, for I sought to induce him to give you some simple lessons, here at the house, for which I would have paid him well, and he would not. He seemed almost offended. On the whole I was more glad than sorry, for many do not think well of him, and it is probable that his doctrines are not very sound — perhaps even pernicious in some particulars. There must be something of that sort to at-



tract such a wild young cub as that Alcibiades, who tented with him in Thrace and follows him now nose up, as if he scented rank meat of some kind. The man is a good soldier I must allow, but he made an ill use of valour when he saved that young whelp from among the pikes. Better for Athens if the brass had bitten him."

I did not try to defend Alcibiades: it did not seem necessary; he did not care. Socrates cared still less; and yet —

"O father," I cried, "he is wiser than anybody" — and I was vexed.

"I suspect, my son, that his wisdom is not very deep; in fact, he himself admits it. Moreover, he meddles too much with things that do not concern him, and so gives needless offence. He provoked even Pericles with foolish questions; and they tell me that he asked Cleon if he thought politics like tanning, where all the beasts that are taken must be slaughtered for their hides. That was not so bad, either. But in his own affairs he is no better than a madman. Why, they say he has just wedded such a wife —" He whitened and stopped short; he could not yet endure any word that recalled my mother's death. He drew in a quick breath, like one who has stepped upon a thorn, then resumed: "That your friend Socrates is apt in turning words I concede, and I have often wondered that he never comes before the assembly. He would certainly prove a more gracious demagogue than Cleon, if only in this, that he does not extort money."



"No," I said, "and he would not kill people — not even when they ought to be killed. He would not let them kill the Syrian."

"We will have that Syrian yet," said my father, frowning. "I perceive a clue, I think. But if our good friend does not like the smell of blood, he is indeed unlike Cleon. The fellow got a decree passed lately for putting to the knife a full thousand of those oligarchs from Mytilene — men who had led in the revolt, yet even so I have doubts that this was altogether wise. But that was not enough for Cleon; he was hot to cut the throats of all that were found in the city, which was sheer folly — nay, rankly unjust, for many of them had aided us. Yet we were scarcely able to save them. Paches — poor fellow — was just leading out the hoplites to begin the work when the reprieve came, after a hot race over the sea."

I pictured to myself a great city with blood in every house. I have never been oversqueamish, yet this sickened me. But the race —

"Tell me about that," I begged him.

"It is nothing much — some rather fine rowing, however. You see the first assembly had voted to kill them all — the people are very headstrong nowadays, my son — and Cleon had sent out the necessary orders. The next day the citizens thought better of it, and we sent out a reprieve. It was a close race, for the first trireme was already half-way over at least. But we picked our crew; each man of them had the promise of silver, and they almost



lifted the ship out of the water. They never once rose from the rowing-benches, not even to eat, but crammed wine-soaked barley into their mouths as they bent forward at the oar; and the stroke of the blades fell as steadily as the hoof-beats when a good horse gallops. The other gang were not straining fir nor bursting oar-slings — if they were paid it was not for speed; they indeed landed first, but when our boat came foaming in just after, although, as I told you, the knives were out, no blood had been spilt. Father Demus is in an ugly mood, my son, and when the rage chokes him he coughs through Cleon. But the Spartans are no better; they do not even respect the dead. I hear they are casting them out unburied now — and that is horrible.”

“Do you think that is worse than killing?” I asked.

“Far worse,” he declared. “Even Socrates, I presume, would grant that.”

“No,” I said. “He doesn’t care anything at all about the body.”

“That is true — he does not,” exclaimed my father, with a sudden illumination. “One may see that at a glance. But he is quite wrong. It is just as I feared: the man is an innovator, and holds opinions of his own devising, which are no proper part either of religion or of sane philosophy.”

And after that he led me no more to listen to the voice of Socrates. I grieved a bit, yet soon forgot; and my loss, perhaps, was not great, for when



Socrates talked with others it was much harder to understand. Besides, I had other business now, and had ceased to abuse my hours with profitless musings.

“Little Theramenes,” my father had said one day, when I had been exploiting with unusual openness some of my notions about Alcibiades, “my little son, you are strangely ignorant of much that you ought to know, and your thoughts are steeped in pestilent fancies.” This surprised me, for I had conceived myself rather keen. He would not argue the point, but went on: “You have been neglected, and I blame myself. You must go to the schools and the gymnasium, to meet others of your own age and learn what is customary. Else,” he said, smiling, “the house of Hagnon will have for its heir no warrior, as of old, but a dreamy, dreary sophist, or perhaps a poet.”

That stung me and I flung away my speculations. The schools, shut for a time by the plague, were again open; and I went out to them every day, even when the snowflakes were flying, with my tunic drawn close about me, and lame old Amblys, a new slave, to attend me. And I found that my father was right: I was absurdly ignorant of all sorts of things that everybody is supposed to know, and this I could not conceal, but made myself ridiculous before the others. The boys laughed at me noisily at first, mocking my curious fancies and odd ways, and giving me the nickname *Skioides*, which I hated; but with hand or tongue, they found, I was



as quick as any, and I soon buffeted and blustered my way to the front.

Of these schoolboy years I shall relate only a few incidents, for now my life was much like that of all the rest. I learned quickly the usual mixture of good and evil, and grew stronger in body and more rugged in spirit. What I lost in baby bloom I gained, perhaps, in the ruddy glow of defiant boyhood, and my father rejoiced at the change, though my mother, as I have often thought, would have sighed.

There was in the school a little Plataean, called Myron, who was being educated at the public expense because his parents had given up their home for Athens, — though his father was one of those who had stayed to garrison the town. I liked him chiefly because he liked me, and was timid and clung to me. There was another, named Thrasybulus, whom I liked even better, because he was so bold and frank and cared for nobody. He was just my own age; I thought him rather conceited, but we got along very well together. There was still another, named Critias, a little older, very unruly, fierce and passionate in his temper, stopping at nothing. He bullied all of us, and we both hated and admired him; he influenced me much, for he had the sort of will that crushes others. Thrasybulus and he often quarrelled, and I made peace between them. “What’s the use?” I would say. “Quit it, both of you, so that we can have some sport.”

At last I quarrelled with him, too. He had

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thrown down Myron and sat on him, twisting his arm and laughing at his cries. First Thrasybulus tried to drag him off, but Critias drove him away and stoned him, then returned to Myron. I began to remonstrate. "Keep your teeth shut," he warned me, "or I will do as much for you, Theramenes. You are always interfering." I persisted, and he caught me suddenly by the throat. I struggled hard, but was choked until everything swam before me, and when he let go I fell flat. But I had taken his strength; and when Thrasybulus came back with a broken spear-shaft and struck him on the head, he too fell and lay across my body. Then Thrasybulus spurned him aside, laughing in triumph, while Myron wept over me and whispered soft words in my ear; but it was long before I heard them.

Do you wonder why I tell of this little affray? Wait — these boys became men.

It was not often that our plays were as rough as that, though the hardness of the time touched even the sports of the children. And in the main we stood by each other, though treachery was not unknown. The school, doubtless, was a good preparation for what was to come after, for our life there was full of strains and temptations, and the master was as harsh as Ares, beating us with a joy like the joy of battle whenever we could not repeat our lessons. Then first I learned the taste of a stick; and I lied to him often, — we all lied to shield each other. I liked the gymnasium better, although there too



thumps were common currency. Boxing I liked especially, and our trainer permitted it with the bare fists or soft wrappings, though he forbade us the heavy cestus of the men. I cared little for blows when it was permitted to strike back; but the other sort burnt into my soul like a branding. Yet blows were the least of sorrows in those days.

One morning, I remember, little Myron came in crying bitterly. He knew nothing of his task and got the rod, weeping just as before. When we went out together we asked him about it, and he told us that his father was dead. The Spartans had taken Plataea at last, and had put to death all that surrendered.

"They shouldn't have surrendered," I said.

"They were starving," he answered. "They were so hungry that they didn't care. And nobody came from here to help them,—not even our own countrymen who had broken through the line and escaped."

"Why wasn't your father one of those?" asked Thrasybulus.

"They told my mother that he did start with them," sobbed Myron, "but when the tiles fell and woke the guard he got frightened and turned back."

"Your father was a fool and has paid the penalty," exclaimed Critias. "When I start anything I always carry it through."

"But what was that about the breaking out?" I asked. "I never heard of it before."

"Of course not," said Critias. "You never heard of anything later than the Odyssey, Theramenes."



"There are things worth knowing in the Odyssey," put in Thrasybulus. "If you and I knew as much of it we should know less of the cane. But that was fine about the Plataëans who got away. I shall always think the better of all Plataëans for that."

"Tell me about it, Thrasybulus," I begged.

So he told me the whole story, while Myron sat in the dust sobbing and Critias stood by and whistled. For we had stopped in the middle of the square.

"The siege had been going on more than a year," he began. "You know about that?"

"No," I confessed. "Tell me everything."

He looked at me in surprise. "One wouldn't think you had good wit, Theramenes, until he had tried you. Well, it was this way."

He found a tile and set it up edgewise. "There, that is the wall," he said. "The Plataëans were behind it, and the whole Spartan army was camped in front, Thebans and Peloponnesians, and helots, and everybody they could bring. And when they tried to take the town because the men inside stood by Athens and wouldn't make terms, first they raised a great mound up against it — so." And he heaped sand against the face of the tile. "But the Plataëan people dug clear under, so that the mound kept falling in — this way." And with a bit of stick he scooped out a hole under the tile and the pile of sand. "But the Spartans kept filling in," he continued — "there were thousands of them, you know; and the



Platæans couldn't get the dirt out fast enough, for there were only four or five hundred of them. So they stopped that and began to make the wall higher in front of the mound, putting all sorts of things on top of it." And he laid the stick along the edge of the tile. "Then, when they found that wouldn't do any longer, because the Spartans kept piling up dirt and the thing was getting shaky, they just took the bricks of their houses and built a new wall in a loop, running round from the old wall on one side, right in front of the mound, back to the wall again on the other side: like the bow of a yoke, — see." He drew a half-circle behind the tile.

"By the gods, that was stiff fighting," broke in Critias.

"My father helped in all that," said Myron, who was looking on eagerly now, with the tears half-dried on his face.

"Yes," I cried. "I see — so that if the Spartans ever got through the first wall they would only be in a little yard before the new one, and would have to begin all over again."

"The Spartans didn't care to try that," said Thrasybulus. "It was too much like going into a pen. So they filled the place up with dry tree-trunks and brush, and threw on pitch and set fire to it."

"And then what happened?"

"Well, it made the hottest fire you ever heard of. The flame roared way up into the sky and filled the city full of sparks and brands, so that the Platæans didn't know what to do. I heard one of them



telling about it in the cheese-market — one of those that got away afterward — and he said that their faces were blistered, and all through the town everything wooden was in a blaze. It's a little place, you know, not much bigger than a fort — that is, it was — and there was one time when the fire blew right over them, almost solid, so that they had to lie down. But the Spartans couldn't get any nearer than the Plataeans could while it kept so hot; and toward night the wind shifted and there came a great, thundering rain-storm that partly put it out. When it grew dark they saw that the second wall was red hot in places, and over beyond it was like the inside of a charcoal pit; but that only burned the bricks harder and melted the faces of them a little, and before it was half cool they were putting fresh ones on the top where it had crumbled some. I like that sort of thing; don't you?"

"Yes, by the infernal goddess — always stiff it out to the end," said Critias, coming closer with his eyes glowing. "Those Plataeans were men."

"They fought like Ajax by the ships," I cried, warmly, before I had time to think, for I was almost ashamed to refer to Homer. "I am glad people are doing things like that nowadays. But what about the escape?"

"That's the jolliest part of it," Thrasybulus continued, kicking down the sand heap in his zeal. "The Spartans gave up storming the place after the fire — and that's just like the Spartans, to quit; yet they didn't exactly quit, either — and that's like



them, too. They let go and took a fresh hold, and tried to strangle the town by a regular siege. I suppose Thebes made them do it: those Thebans hate the Plataëans so. Anyhow, they set up a double brick wall all round the city, with a ditch on each side and towers every little way and the parts between roofed over. Then they marched off home, just as they do every year when they've done burning our villages; but they left plenty of men to keep the fences. So nobody could get in and nobody could get out, and after awhile there wasn't much left to eat. Then about half the Plataëans decided they wouldn't stay any longer; and they didn't stay, though it was an awful risk to take. First they made a lot of ladders just the right length — they got that by counting the tiers of brick in the Spartan wall — then one cold, stormy night, when there wasn't any moon and everything was rattling in the wind, they started out, over two hundred of them. They went barefoot, and kept wide apart so as not to clash their shields. The guards had all sneaked under cover, for there was a driving sleet, and the Plataëans had got their ladders up, and a lot of them were already on the roof, when somebody knocked down a tile." He aimed a kick at the one he had set on edge, but missed it with advantage to his toes. "Then somebody yelled in the nearest tower, and the alarm started. It started both ways at once and went clear round the line with a regular roar; and a great crashing noise mixed in with it and chased after it, as the Spartans turned out with their arms.



That was the time when some of the Plataëans got scared and ran back to the city."

He was dancing from one foot to the other. Myron began to cry again, but we did not mind him. Thrasybulus went on: "It was the biggest" — he almost stuttered — "the biggest mix-up ever was. Everybody was yelling now, and the lights flared everywhere, but nobody but the Plataëans could see anything, or knew what was the matter or where to go. Those that were left in the city made a rush for the wall on the opposite side, and set up such a racket that the Spartans thought the trouble was there. The others that were on the roof had got the towers on both sides of them, and when anybody came near with lights they let fly at him. They kept swarming up the ladders and down the further side and through the ditch, which was just about half frozen over, and lined up on the bank with their targets and throwing-spears all ready. The Spartans didn't kill one, and only one was caught — hard luck for him, wasn't it?"

"Worse luck for the fools that went back," muttered Critias.

"Oh, go on!" I cried.

"Well, the Spartans tried to signal to Thebes, but the Plataëans in the city mixed them all up with torches on the walls. At last a line of hoplites got formed outside, but their torches kept them from seeing anything, and the Plataëans let drive at them a few times and then slipped off in the dark. They went straight toward Thebes! And they saw the



other fellows with their torches heading for the Oak Knobs and the pass over Cithæron. But the Plataeans only went north about a mile; a little way beyond Juno's temple they turned sharp to the right and made their way over the mountains into Attica. The next day they were all here in the city." He eased his breath a little.

"But what became of those that stayed?"

"Those? Why there wasn't much of anything left to eat, and the Spartans promised them a fair trial, so at last they surrendered. Then the Spartans found them all guilty. Myron knows. But some day you'll get even with them, Myron, and we'll help you. Wish we could begin now!"

Old Amblys, who had been leaning on his staff, hobbled nearer. "The young master must go to the gymnasium now," he said, looking at the sky, "and the poor old slave will have to puff like Hephæstus to keep up with him."



## IX.

### *The Demagogue*

SO the stream of my life flowed on through the years of boyhood, — rippling along the streets of Athens like the rill from a winter storm, born under the trickle of a black sky thunder-riven, but sparkling now in the sunlight while the clouds are breaking; for as yet my streamlet was far too shallow to bear within it shadows of its own. It may be that the clouds will gather again to weep over a doomed city; it may be that this rill is to swell at last to a turbid torrent, dark-hearted, rushing down these same streets with the remorseless fury of vengeance, and joining with others sweep away all the glories of Athens, even to the undermining of her walls. Not by my will — not that — never by my will or purpose! But who can resist the will of fate? That which was set in train from the beginning no wish of man can hinder.

And perhaps, when all is done, I would not have it otherwise. Was it I — was it I indeed that wrought this ruin? or did that dark and desperate game I played save all that survived of Athens? And when I had set my life as the final stake, and he who played against me overturned the tables and



snatched it from me, did I pay a just forfeit? Has my name been rightly blotted on the annals of time?

Reader, I have appointed you to be my judge. To you I make my appeal — for you I have written this history; and when it is finished you shall give the verdict. I will tell you all the truth — even as I told it to Æacus at the gates of shadow. But the end is still far off. The sun is shining now; let us walk in the sunshine while we may.

For again there was gladness in Athens. The plague had long since departed, though leaving its traces in deep scars on the flesh and deeper scars in memory. But the terror was gone; the air once more was sweet, and we breathed it with joy. The war, too, had taken a happier turn. It was now in its ninth year, and I in my thirteenth. Despite some reverses, good fortune glittered on our helmets and flashed from our prows. Especially after our wonderful success at Pylos — where, in the face of all the traditions, more than a hundred young Spartans of the best families had yielded to save their lives — the smoke of the annual ravage lifted from our land and drifted far away. Our sentinels still paced on the dizzy ramparts, sixty feet in air, scanning the broad basin of the valley blackened with fire-blots and ragged with olive stumps, but no more hostile armies came in view. They dared not; we were using these noble captives as hostages, and war was turned into parley. The Spartans were actually begging for peace, and we were in no haste to grant it.



This great change had come to pass in the previous summer, when Archidamus, who had just arrived on his usual errand, suddenly left our fields while the green corn was yet standing, recalled by the startled Ephors to fight in fields nearer home. Loud was the bellow of rage at Sparta, but they were helpless; we had them fast by the middle, and like an overconfident wrestler played with their struggles. And during this crisis I had my first glimpse of that wild assembly whose tumult I was to face so often.

I had been for some time house-bound by a cruel wrench that Critias gave me as we fought in the pancratiun — it was no fair match, and forbidden, too, but he had challenged me — and when at length I crept out, wincing with twinges at every step, it was Thrasybulus, as usual, who brought me the latest news. For he was always scouting about the shops on the edge of the market, listening to the men's talk. He was red with excitement.

“Have you heard?” he asked.

“About what?”

“How the fleet was sailing from Corcyra, and a storm drove them into the harbour at Pylos?”

“Yes, I know.”

“And how Demosthenes — the raider that did such good fighting round Naupactus — persuaded the men to build a fort there on the rocks? They built it of rough stones,” he cried, carried away by his enthusiasm, “and they lugged the mud they used for mortar on their bare backs, for they hadn't any



proper tools. They just stooped with their arms clasped behind to hold it on."

"I know. And as soon as our ships were gone the whole Spartan army and the Spartan fleet came up in a hurry; but they couldn't do anything. The last I heard was how Brasidas tried to force a landing, and ran his boat right up on the beach, and fought from the prow till he fainted from bleeding and fell backward and lost his shield."

"He's the best man they've got," said Thrasybulus, decisively. "The rest are so slow; but Brasidas might have been an Athenian."

I assented heartily; but I had no thought then what this name might mean to me. He ran on:

"Have you heard, though, how our fleet came back and caught the Spartan ships in the bay, and drove them ashore, — as many as they didn't take? The Spartans did fight like boar dogs on the beach."

This was new to me. "Well," he continued, "you've been missing the very best of it. Curse that Critias — we're not through with him yet. Never mind, I'll tell you; I like to. You see there's an island ten stades long right across the mouth of the bay. The Spartans had put some men there — real Lycurgus men, remember that. Well, they're there yet."

"They are!"

"They're right there, and we're going to get them. Hasn't been anything like it since old Pelops died. Some of our war-ships keep paddling round



and round the island all day, and lie about it, prows in, every night; and the men that are trapped there are getting as hungry as all Megara. The Ephors came down from Sparta to our camp, and they fairly wallowed. Begged for a truce, and gave all the rest of their ships — which we've kept, though all Sparta is howling. Trust us to find reasons. Then some of their foremost men came here in one of our boats to make terms; but that bull Cleon had his tail up and was pawing sand, so all the satisfaction they got was the fun of hearing him bellow. They went back with blue faces. They got one good turn on him, though, before they left."

"How?" I asked. "Don't hurry so, Thrasybulus; my ankle won't stand it."

"Well, they'd been offering pretty nearly everything between Olympus and Hades, but we wouldn't hear to it. At last they just proposed to exchange even, man for man. Cleon roared at that, but they caught him short, and said they were glad to see that he too realised that no Athenian was worth a Spartan. So the assembly broke up with a laugh. But now some of the people are getting worried. We've been wasting too much time. The season is growing late, the winter storms are coming, and those Spartans are still on the island when they ought to be in Athens. Think of it — if they should get away after all!"

"Hold on!" I exclaimed, sucking my breath with pain as my ankle turned. "You're killing me. Where are we going, anyway?"



“Demosthenes has sent for more soldiers. There’s going to be an assembly, and Cleon will dance on the footstool of Pericles. Come along! Here, take my shoulder, you limping Lemnian,” he said, halting good-naturedly, though his feet burned with haste.

“They won’t let us in,” I objected.

“Never you fear,” he answered. “We’re not going to Lacedæmon, to be lashed off the premises; but unless we hurry we shall arrive like a Spartan fleet, just a day too late.”

So I hobbled on at best speed, though the tears started now and then. When we reached the Pnyx he helped me to the top of a low wall, leaped up himself, and there we sat, dangling our legs at ease. The assembly was full, but none noticed us; all eyes were turned another way. Far beyond this nodding barley-field of shaggy heads, rose the great stone platform of the bema, where the orators and the magistrates were gathered. Business had begun, and Cleon was already at the front, pacing the rock with uncouth gestures and haranguing the people in the style he had learned among the beeves and drovers. His voice seemed loud even where we hung on the outskirts; nearer it must have been deafening. He was on the defensive, apparently.

“It is all your own fault,” he was shouting. “Am I to be blamed for good, honest counsel? Did I elect fools to be your generals? The gods on Olympus cannot help a fool, nor save those



who trust in fools." He pointed to a big, pursy man with a blanched, unwholesome face, who sat uneasily among the officials. "Your generals wear victory only in their names," he cried; "they are as bold as hares; they win triumphs with choruses; they think to lift sieges with hoisting-engines from their silver mines; they are keen politicians in the slave-market, but in the assembly liverless dotards. Look at his cheesy cheeks!"

A roar of laughter followed. "That's Nicias," whispered Thrasybulus.

Cleon raised his voice to its loudest: "If your generals were men," he trumpeted, "these Spartans would to-day sit in chains before you, and our only debate would be how best to use them."

"How if they were tanners?" came a voice from the crowd.

"Why, if *I* were general," he shouted back, "I would have them here in twenty days."

Again the assembly shook with laughter. "Why don't you do it, Cleon? — Then go and get them, Cleon! — Try it, Cleon! we'll give you twenty days" — these were the cries that rang from every quarter.

Even Cleon faltered at that. "You know that I am no general," he protested. "But if I were, I could do it."

The cries redoubled. It was rare sport to see Cleon posed. "Make him general! — Send him out with reinforcements!" — echoed the voices.



"This goes too far," I whispered to Thrasybulus. "The people are crazy."

"Well," he answered, "we should either get the Spartans or get rid of Cleon. At least, that's what Nicias thinks."

He was right. Nicias had already risen with an evil smile. He spoke with ease and force, though his manner was cringing.

"Good citizens," he said, "you have uttered a voice that is like Apollo's oracle. The gods have spoken by your tongues; it is an omen; it cannot result amiss. By all means send out this man as general; let us not lose an opportunity so precious. And let none imagine that I shall stand in the way. I too wish to see these Spartans securely chained — if it be so easy to take Spartans alive — and I gladly resign my office to one so much more competent. Make him general and send him out on his own conditions; and if, perchance, you should later find that he is but a liar and an empty braggart, that lesson will prove a good purchase."

Again and again Cleon shrunk back, but the people would not have it otherwise. At last he faced about.

"Elect me, then," he cried, boldly, "and I will make good my word. Nor do I ask for one Athenian hoplite to lead into what he might deem peril. Only give me a few of these Lemnians and Imbrians for a ballast, and let Demosthenes be my lieutenant, and in twenty days I will produce before you every Spartan in the island, alive or dead, — for



I cannot undertake to guarantee their health in case they prove obstinate."

And so it was voted with an overwhelming clamour of assenting voices: all parties joined in this mad performance. Seeing the assembly about to break, we slid from the wall and made off.

"Now wasn't that worth a leg, you hobbling Hephæstus?" demanded Thrasybulus, as he bent his neck to the yoke of my arm. But I was too full of thought to answer. Soon we were overpassed by throngs of citizens, laughing and discussing the chances.

"I lay you three obols — and that's a fair day's wages — that he does it," one exclaimed.

"And I lay you a drachma that he doesn't — and that's double," retorted another.

"Thrasybulus," I said, in a low tone as we shuffled along, "I like Cleon the better. I spit at that Nicias. If anything ill happens, he is to blame."

"Well," he answered, "Nicias is a good man, able and well esteemed. He is rich, too, and gives freely, and they say he's the most pious man in Athens; but he hasn't the heart of a pigeon. He salutes all the sycophants on the street, and they just live off him. He's always dreadfully busy, but never does anything. Cleon is a terrible bully and as greedy as a hog; but there really is something about him that one likes better."

In fact, the wonder of wonders came to pass. Cleon fulfilled his promise to the letter. It was early on the morning of the twentieth day when Thrasy-



bulus came banging at the door. Trogon rubbed his eyes, peered out, and let him in.

"He's got them," Thrasybulus shouted, when he saw me. There was no need of names, for all Athens had been talking of nothing else.

"Alive?" I cried.

"Alive!" he answered. "A hundred and twenty Spartans of the full blood!"

"And Cleon! How ever did he do it?"

"Yes, Cleon — or Demosthenes, perhaps. It's all the same — Cleon is bringing them home. We burnt the cover off the island, landed a lot of men, and showered them with spindles until they flung up their hands."

Together we ran down to the port — my ankle was nearly well now — and reached it just in time to see the dejected procession file down the plank, while all Athens shouted. They were not in chains, either — we used them well — fine-looking young fellows, but the most shamed of any I ever saw. As for Cleon, he was despot of Athens that day — if he so chose. He acted like it, but simply rubbed in his triumph. Nicias stood at a distance with a group of friends. He always looked like cheese, but that morning he even looked mouldy. I longed to throw mud at him. For more than a month the city was in jubilation.

Then a general truce was made for a year — though there was still fighting in Thrace, where Brasidas was recklessly stirring up revolts. But at home there were only embassies passing to and



fro; and as I have told you, the war was in its ninth year, and I was thirteen, and the sun shone bright over Athens.

My father went on some of these missions, for once he had served as proxenus for Sparta and had friendships there and much influence.

"Theramenes," he said, one day, "it is time that you saw more of other places. Make ready to start with me to-morrow. We go to Sparta."

"But can I, father?" I asked. "Will they let me in?" For I had heard queer stories of Spartan customs.

"At present they will do almost anything that we desire," he announced. "However, for form's sake, you will go as my shield-bearer."

"Yes, I can carry your shield now, father — easily."

"That will hardly be needful," said he, smiling, "unless it be at the moment of our first reception. It is merely a matter of ceremony, my son, and an honourable office. You are still too raw; the attendants will bear our burdens."

We set out the very next day.



X.

*On the Road to Sparta*

THE great things of life do not come to pass unheralded. I have ever thought lightly of those ingenious omens which clever professionals read by rule from the flight of birds or the bowels of beasts. It is not in such tricky fashion that fate speaks to us; yet the voice of the future is always sounding, and they are but fools who are not warned. For who does not know that great sorrows come like the storm, with damp breath and a swell of warning winds? Death itself — unless it be that mad, glad death which rushes forth from the clang of trumpets, spilling the blood while it yet is hot — death too comes with a forecast of out-creeping shadows and deepening gloom; and perhaps, to him who lifts his eyes, a brightening star. But when the great joy of youth approaches, its herald is like the rosy, zenith-pointing finger of the dawn; the whole sky encarminates, and the violet mist of ether sprays downward until all the air is drenched in fiery exhalations. Then the eye makes ready for the rising sun, and the nostrils tingle and the heart leaps up with a perilous throb, — for this



wine of the dawn is the very nectar of the gods, and the crimson juices of the grape are as nothing to it.

Such a dawn was in the sky as we set forth on our journey; and such a dawn was in my heart. Then, by some untraceable suggestion, the words of Socrates came back to me and sang in my ear, — “The soul is that part which was not born and cannot die, but is your very self.” Then, like an echo, — “Some wonderful thing is coming to that within you which was not born and never dies, but is your very self.” Yet for a time nothing befell other than might have been expected.

The weather was cold, and a thin paste of snow lay on the ground as we started; for it was still winter. We filed slowly through the streets just as the doors were opening, — our number about fifty, including the soldiers and servants, all mounted upon horses or asses. I had wondered a little that we did not go by ship, since the sea was our own domain; but they told me that the voyage was too rough at this season, and the roads were at present accounted safe. So the gates creaked open and crashed behind us, and we emerged on the great processional road to Eleusis just as the sun broke over the hills in our rear. And now, as we crossed the open plain, the sea-wind struck us with such stinging buffets that it whipped my blood to madness. Are not these the airs that have ever made our Hellas the battle-ground of freedom? The very slaves grew restless as they breathed it. As for me,



with my cloak streaming like a pennant from my throat, my wide hat flapping and tugging at its laces, I lashed my horse to a gallop and wheeled and careened on the slippery track until the stern voice of my father checked me.

“I know well that you are but a lad,” he said, “but remember that you march with men.”

The melted snow was already channelling the hill-slope when we mounted the low pass leading to the Eleusinian vale, where the sea again came in view, rolling up the beach in rainbow curves. We did not pause to enter the little town, but rode straight past the ancient temple about which I had heard so many whispers. Then the road grew narrow and steep and winding, scarcely more than a trail, as we threaded the mountains of the border. The keen wind chilled me now; I grew so stiff and weary that I could scarcely sit upon my horse.

The sun was already low when we descended into the Megarian country, — a mere desert now, for here we had avenged all that our fields had suffered from torch and axe. Twice every year from the war's beginning, we had ravaged this little land with the bitterness of pent-up hate. Not a tree was standing, nor a house; and in all that desolate plain we saw but a single man, lean and fierce, skulking among the stumps. Doubtless the dark circuit of the city walls which now rose before us contained many such, full of rage and hunger, with no welcome for either friend or foe. We did not seek shelter there, but after fording a swollen



stream turned leftward to the fortress at Nisæa, the port captured the year before and still held by our forces. There was no delay at the gate, and we were presently quartered in a large caravansary, thawing and steaming before a fire of logs in the open court; for they had no coals. Our couches were spread on the floor within, and as soon as I had eaten I relaxed my sore joints under the blankets; but I lay awake for a time, listening to the talk of the men, for the captain of the garrison had come down and was plying my father with questions. I heard the name of Brasidas repeated many times: he had thwarted their plans against Megara, it seems, while on his way to Thrace, where he was now making further trouble.

“There can be no peace till that fellow is dead,” exclaimed the captain loudly; and with those words in my ears I fell asleep.

The strange dream that followed was meaningless, perhaps; yet I will tell it. Brasidas himself stood before me. In one hand he held a city, full of people; in the other a rose, bright with dew-drops; “Choose,” he said — “one, but not both.” I snatched the rose, for in my dream it seemed to me fragrant and beautiful beyond all price: whereupon he flung the city at my feet, and it broke in pieces; and his face was changed. I stooped to gather up the fragments, but as I strove to lay them together the rose fell from my hand and lay with scattered petals; yet the fragrance was sweeter than before. Then a darkness came, and through it



white faces scowled at me; a great horror was upon me, and my limbs grew numb. I awoke in an agony of grief and fear. The darkness and the tears were real enough; and so was the numbness, for I had flung off my blanket. As for those faces — I cannot assume to say whether dreams are prophetic, — but I have seen them since.

I slept little after that, but lay shivering; and when I arose it was like the morning after wine. Yet the day's ride called for a firm hand with a steady eye to guide it; for we followed the seashore road which runs like a narrow shelf along the face of the cliffs, so that to one looking landward across the waves we must have appeared like a moving group of statues set in a pediment. For at times if a pebble glanced from a horse's hoof it fell in the surf that crashed beneath, while above us the crags jutted out like a cornice and overhung the track; only here and there was it possible for those who met to pass in safety. But we encountered few. Once, at a dizzy, projecting angle, a stolid Megarian flattened himself against the rock as we brushed by. As I passed I shuddered and thought of Sciron; for one strong push would have set my horse on a path of air. But that was the climax; at length the road widened and descended, a cultivated plain opened before us on the right, and the mountain citadel of Corinth came in view. We soon crossed the great ship-road where the galleys were dragged across the isthmus from sea to sea, but it was nightfall when we halted at the closed gate



of the town. Only after a long and wrangling parley were we admitted. Within, money secured us food and lodging, but black looks were our chief entertainment. It was easy to see that these people were greatly vexed about the truce, and when we rode forth in the morning we were almost mobbed. Painted women screamed insults from roofs and windows, while the gathering rabble pursued us with threats and curses. My father wheeled and faced them.

"Take heed what you do," he shouted, "for we travel under the safe-conduct of your own allies."

"Your allies — not ours," called back one of them.

"Since Pylos, Sparta's iron is turned to lead," growled another.

"The Spartan oaks have been shedding shields," bawled a third. "Perhaps they will come and teach us how to surrender!"

"Or how to betray allies! and a sneaking Thesalian could do as much."

"Have these brave words yet been uttered in Sparta, — or do you wish me to report them there?" retorted my father. But already they had begun to slink away, for the gate with its armoured guard was near; and we passed out unscathed, though our cheeks were hot.

Before us and on the right rose mountains sheathed in shining snow far down their slopes; yet the breezes were soft and springlike. At first I fancied that I saw snow on the low hills near us



also, but this was only the gleam from sunlit patches of bare, white earth. We moved swiftly now, amid planted fields and through valleys where the sheep were grazing, easily reaching Argos before a man's shadow would exceed a spear's length. Here again we heard taunts against the Spartans, whose name was fast losing its magic; but we were ourselves received with marked courtesy, and well entertained by a citizen who professed much friendship for Athens.

"It can be done," I overheard him saying to my father — "it can and shall be done. But we must still be cautious; we must wait."

The next day I had a new taste of the hardships of a winter march. In the morning our course lay along the coast, — a mere margin of plain, notched by encroaching mountain spurs and cut through by the streams which rushed down between them. The fords were by no means at their worst, yet the crossing was perilous business; at least, it seemed so to me. More than once I cried out with fear as my stout beast swayed in the current and I felt the ice-cold water lapping my thighs.

Then, as our shadows shortened with the approach of noon, our path bent upward, and our horses' hoofs began to rattle on the stones. A camp appeared on the right, but when we had showed our tokens to the captain he let us pass. So we climbed on through ravines dark with pines, struggling up steep stairways of twisted roots. Often we extorted a track from the grudging banks of torrents, and



when they grew shallower even made their plashing beds our road. My father kept as near me as he could.

"This is worse than I thought," he said. "I was wrong to choose so rough a route. A Spartan lad of your age would make little of it, but you have been bred more softly."

"No," I told him, "I am glad we came this way. I like it better so."

Yet I shuddered at every stumble, and my eyes were blurred with giddiness, and my chest ached with the strain of my bated breath before that sheer ascent was finished. I was only a boy, and a green horseman.

We were now far up the heights in a region of glens, riding amid a growth of gnarled and stubby oaks, unlike any that I had ever seen. Their trunks were as weather-worn as the rocks, and in the same way mottled with silvery lichen and green mosses; while the limbs, bare of leaves, waved weirdly with streamers of the grassy golden mistletoe. Often we crunched through snowbanks, still mounting aloft against gusts of icy wind, until at last we attained a bleak, flat summit which my father told me was the scene of the famous duel between the Argives and the Spartans; and he pointed out the spot where the brave Othryades slew himself beside his trophy because he was ashamed to survive his comrades.

"They fall on their swords no longer," growled Laches, who had halted near us. "They have



learned to fall on their faces instead, else our mission were an idle one." His teeth chattered. "This is no place to delay, even if the tale be false that the silly shades still battle here in the moonlight. Let us hurry on."

The day was spent, and the billowy ridges below us lay pale in twilight, but we plunged downward through the dangerous gloom. At times I shut my eyes and left all to my horse, with a trembling trust. Thus we groped in black shadow, while the moon rose slowly behind until its rays glinted down the slope from ledge to ledge; then we came upon a sheepfold sunk in a hollow, where the dogs which rushed out at us baying, were beaten off with spear-butts. The shepherds themselves clamoured almost as loudly; yet we forced our welcome and passed the night with fleas and helots.

I was roused by a jargon of curses and a scuffle that set the sheep bleating. Our guards had seized one of the men to serve as guide, — a savage-looking fellow, dressed in foul, woolly hides, surly as the dogs at first, but soon brought to reason by the sight of money. He led us through the mists down the channel of a stream which he called Phounias: its waters sucked at my legs as we crossed from side to side, and I could well believe that its heart was murderous in flood-time. At last we emerged on the brow of a long declivity. The mist was now full of light, but still hung about us like a shining veil. Then it shook in the wind, and parted,



and blew away in gray shreds, scudding along the ridges.

"There!" said the helot.

The wide Laconian valley lay before us, streaked with streams, dotted with hamlets, its fields already green with the springing grain. Beyond rose the jagged crests of Taygetus, helmeted in ice which flashed back the morning sun. Far down to the left we caught a glimmer of the sea; but on our right the head of the valley lifted itself in a tumult of hills and mountains more lofty than those behind us. These were the walls of Sparta, that needed no other: the whole land was a fortress.

"Now I go to my sheep," said our guide.

We needed him no longer, and he clambered back up the ravine with his silver. Soon we were cantering over the plain, breathing air that was like summer in its softness. The birds were twittering in busy flocks among the clods; the lowing of cattle was all about us; the very helots were laughing as they issued from the villages. Here the Spartan had lived in peace, while his armies had trampled down our vineyards and left no shade of roof or bough in all Attica. I thought of the ashes of our home.

"Is there no other road — no easier pass?" I cried out, angrily.

"There are other roads, but none is easy," replied my father. "No enemy has ever entered by any one of them since the Dorian made this place his citadel. My son, do not think vain thoughts."



"Yet they yielded at Pylos," I persisted.

"They yielded; and all men wondered. Cut off on a rock and assailed by twenty times their number they yielded; and even so our task was not easy."

"But they flee before our ships — eighty of theirs against twenty, and they fled from Phormio," I cried.

"Athens is the mother of ships," he answered, "and the sea, with all its coasts and islands, is hers. But where the phalanx ranges Sparta rules. Think no vain thoughts, my son."

We rode on in silence. Sparta itself was now in sight, — a mere straggle of villages stretched along the low hills that rose beyond the distant river. It seemed unworthy of its fame — indeed, scarcely worthy to be called a city; for it lay like an overgrown hamlet, open on every side, without wall or tower or symmetry. Here and there great buildings appeared, some of them quite imposing and in a rude way magnificent; there was one in particular that glittered on the highest crest in a sheen of brazen plates. But to me they all seemed uncouth and out of place; the whole effect was disappointing.

Soon we were met by a convoy of hoplites, led by a grizzled old taxiarch called Rhyzon, between whose house and ours, as my father told me, there was an ancient guest-bond. His face was full of hard lines, but he greeted us with gruff civility. At me, however, he stared with unconcealed contempt.



"Very pretty," he growled, "but is it a lad or a lass? If these be your soldiers, Hagnon, a Spartan girl could master them."

"I fear not the match," I answered, hotly.

"It should be an evil match for you," he answered. "In what sort of contest, young man, do you profess this skill?"

"I can wrestle," I cried, for I had learned many trips from Critias.

He frowned blackly. My father's lips twitched with a smile.

"At least, I have never yet flung up my hands," I added.

He raised his stick. "Hold, Rhyzon," exclaimed my father. "It is my son; and if, in thoughtlessness, he spoke below his breeding, it was not without provocation."

The Spartan lowered his arm and smote his staff upon the ground. "If he be your son he is my guest," he said. "I knew him not, and old eyes do not love new faces. But let me tell you, Hagnon, he is too presuming. No Spartan youth would thus wag a saucy tongue at age."

"Aye," responded my father. "A Spartan's spear is sharp, but his tongue is blunt."

"It is not too big to lie behind his teeth," said Rhyzon.

This certainly seemed true of our escort, to whom I now turned my attention lest I give more offence. They were handsome young fellows, strong-limbed and splendidly equipped, but they marched in silence,



never swerving their eyes from the track, with a tramp as steady as the beat of oars. They did not even clash their arms; every shield and spear was set at the same angle, and the interspaces never varied. I longed to question them, but dared not. Here was a tension of discipline that was new to me.

We crossed the Eurotas on an ancient bridge, leaving behind us our soldiers and servants, for none of them were allowed to enter the city. On the further bank we also parted from our associates, who were led away to be entertained in different quarters. We alone continued with Rhyzon; and after passing through various streets we at length came out on the brow of a hill-slope facing the river. The Spartan turned toward me with a singular air.

“Look, young Athenian boaster,” he said. “Look, before you defy the maids of Sparta.”



## XI.

### *A Wrestling Mat*

THE slope on the verge of which we were standing was crowded with men and women; all Sparta, I think, was there. At its foot lay a race-course, traced by barriers on the flat floor of the hollow, and toward this all eyes were bent. My gaze went with theirs; and I beheld a spectacle which only Sparta could offer and which few except Spartans ever looked upon. For those who contended were maidens, — the fairest in Hellas, — and at that very moment a bevy of them hung in a little white cloud at the furthest limit of the track. Then, with a flutter of shining feet and a streaming glow of ruddy faces, a flock of these lissome nymphs broke from the line and sped over the sand like quail darting to cover. They ran with wonderful grace and swiftness, and their dress, though simple and closely gathered, was in no way immodest, — this I caught at a glance. One seemed to loiter; she will lose, I thought, and somehow I was sorry; but as they neared the goal she passed all with the swoop of a swallow, and the hillside rang with the name of Gorgo.



“Who is she?” I exclaimed.

The Spartan looked at me keenly. “You have heard of a certain Brasidas,” he said, “whom they call the firebrand? He is my brother, though younger by twenty years. Him Gorgo calls father—a stout enemy to thee and thine.”

I remembered my dream with a sudden heart-quake, and was silent. I looked down toward Gorgo, but fierce faces came between.

Three more races were quickly run by different bands; then the four winners were matched for the final contest. Two soon fell to the rear; but Gorgo, not venturing to linger now, ran side by side with the swiftest of her rivals until the goal was within a spear’s length, when she leaped forward as if the wind had lifted her, crossing at one bound; while the other, crimson and gasping, stumbled in a full pace behind—so distressed that she would have fallen had not the flushed victor turned to support her. Again the voice of the multitude went up in cheers for Gorgo.

“How now, young wrestler?” sneered the Spartan in my ear. “You Athenians were swift of foot at Delium; perhaps you would even race with these?”

“I would match with Gorgo for Atalanta’s prize,” I answered, boldly, “but not without golden apples.”

He scowled; I perceived that somehow my random words had hit home.

“I like not these shows of well-born women,” said



my father. "Your boast is empty, Rhyzon; you know that this thing cannot be. Yet the boy, too, is swift, and he shall not be taunted. If it were not unseemly, I would back him for a talent."

"You jest," said the Spartan.

"I was hasty," smiled my father. "I had forgot that the sons of Lycurgus care nothing for money."

The Spartan laughed aloud, then glanced hastily about him; we were standing somewhat apart. "Athenian," said he, stepping closer, "of all the idle tales that are told in the name of Lycurgus, this is the most absurd, that we of Sparta know not the uses of money. Show me the house that has no hoard beneath its hearthstone, and I will show you the home of a fool. That talent of yours would serve me well; but in public — you say true, it cannot be."

"But have you none of that money made of iron and hardened in vinegar?" I asked.

"A peck of meal may be bought with it," he answered.

"And the sack goes to market heavier than it returns," added my father.

"Gold alone buys power, and gold alone buys safety," muttered Rhyzon. "Come."

"Are there no more contests?" I asked.

"Not for you, wrestler," he answered, shortly. "Come: will you wait for the floggers?"

I cast a long look at Gorgo, who now stood waving the palm branch of victory; then turned, reluctantly enough.



“Cherish no idle fancies, dreamer,” whispered my father as we passed on.

“What do you mean?” I asked him; but he did not explain.

The house to which Rhyzon conducted us stood in a wide yard girt with a wall. It was large but low, built of rough-hewn timbers ashen with age.

“It was standing in the time of Charilaus, and Alcander dwelt in it,” announced the Spartan, rather pompously. “Few strangers have loosed their sandals at its door.”

“Hospitality is not a Spartan vice,” remarked my father.

“I will not say that you are welcome,” he retorted bluntly. “But enter: you shall have the best in a plain house.”

Once inside, it struck me that this plainness was largely affectation. The walls, indeed, were as rough within as without; but the furnishings were not altogether such as coins of iron would purchase, — a half-barbarous mingling of the rude and the costly.

“My brother has been much abroad and brought home a brood of follies,” grumbled Rhyzon, with uneasy glances.

“Including Gorgo?” ventured my father.

“The tongue that says it shall be torn from its rootage,” cried the Spartan, fiercely. “Repeat it not, Athenian. She was born abroad, but the blood is pure.” Then his lips were locked like a miser’s chest.



“Enough, Rhyzon,” said my father, soothingly. “I am rightly rebuked, and the more to blame because I have seen the proof. For who but a Spartan born could contend with the maids of Sparta, and vanquish all, as did Gorgo to-day?”

The old man’s face was still purple, but he turned from us to the grim-faced helots in waiting.

“Tables and couches,” he shouted, harshly, “and he who lags races with the lash.”

The two men reclined, but I sat upright beside my father. “Come,” said the Spartan, unbending a little, “this is better. I had heard that your upstart boys would make no scruple to lie down before their elders. The son of Hagnon is better bred.”

“It is not of Sparta alone that fables are told,” responded my father.

The sun had set and the hall was dark, but helots with lighted torches stood behind us. The supper was coarse but hearty, with an unexpected abundance of wine, of which our host drank freely. His face flamed as he discussed old campaigns and told rude stories of the camp, and even my father’s tongue grew looser than was its wont. Of this, I suppose, he presently became conscious, for he stopped in the midst of a tale of sack and pillage, and bade me retire.

“Aye, lead the lad to his chamber,” said Rhyzon, rolling on his couch. “And make soft his bed in the place I bade you,” he snorted, with a laugh. “The old men of Sparta do not pillow their heads



upon a stone, and these ambassadors must have the privilege of age."

A torch-bearer went before me, crossing an open court. The room into which I was ushered, though like all the rest in ruggedness of construction, was hung with tapestry and rather daintily furnished. A brazen mirror hung on the wall; I knew in a moment that this was some part of the women's quarters, and I the victim of a Spartan jest. Further inspection disclosed a Persian collar and bracelets. I turned in anger; the helot grinned, but would not let me pass. I was helpless; and the bed, at least, was inviting, piled high on the planks. I flung myself upon it, sinking deep in the clean, sweet linen, while the fellow bolted the door and departed.

I was soon very drowsy, yet found my fancy too busy for slumber, and for a long time lay awake gazing at dreams. That was no new experience, but an old plague of my childhood; it had abated somewhat, but I still dreaded its recurrent seasons. For I lay like one under a spell, and whether I closed my eyes or held them wide open, all manner of gleaming figures streamed across the darkness, — terrible, beautiful, familiar, fantastic, in ceaseless procession. My mother smiled from her shroud; my grandfather glared from his chair, and women raved beside corpses; the eyes of Alcibiades glittered amid the lamps; and the Syrian came, and the Nubian with his lantern, and the homely face of Socrates blotted out both. And over these spec-



tral shapes I had no control; they flushed and faded as boding lights dance in the northern sky.

But that night they were changed; and chiefly the maids of Sparta raced on the dusky horizon, with Gorgo ever in the lead. Then, as I lost my sense of place, I too was racing; she turned, with a mocking laugh; her face came so close that it filled my sight, yet I saw nothing clearly — and suddenly I was sitting with outstretched arms in darkness and silence. Yet I could have sworn that I heard her. Some voice I certainly heard, between sleeping and waking, — rippling forth with a brook-like gurgle of laughter not far away.

I had intended to insist on a change of quarters; but in the morning, although the Spartan eyed me curiously and let fly an ambiguous scoff, I made no reference to the matter. Instead, I watched eagerly for Gorgo, and caught one glimpse as she flitted across the courtyard like a sun-flash from a broken cloud. Then, for three days, nothing. It was not until our stay was almost ended that I finally met her, face to face.

On the morning of the day before our departure my father called me aside. Our mission, he told me, had ended only in postponements, like all the rest. Then he hesitated.

“We have been drinking a good deal of late,” he said, at length. “This Spartan wine is hotter than ours. You will do well, my son, to drink sparingly of it.”



"Yes," I answered. "I do not care for the wine."

"This Rhyzon," he went on, in an embarrassed way, "drinks like a sand-pit and shows it as little. He is a strange fellow, and very avaricious. He insists that I have wagered with him to match you against Gorgo, for a talent."

"I will meet her," I said.

"I do not like it," continued my father, uneasily; "but he declares that I swore by the shrine of Apollo. I shall be more heedful hereafter."

"I shall win," I cried. For I made sure the laugh would be mine this time, and it pleased me to think of wresting silver from the surly Spartan.

"It is not so much the talent that I care for," explained my father, "though it is a great sum to cast upon the sand. But the whole affair is unseemly. If you win, it is not a thing to boast of, and defeat is disgraceful."

"I shall win," I repeated.

"Well, it will never be heard of in Athens — nor elsewhere. Rhyzon will not be so rash as to mention it, nor shall we. So unless this girl —"

"Gorgo will never tell," I announced, positively.

"Have you had words with her?" he asked, sternly.

"No," I answered, — but blushed. "When do we race?"

"The match will be made to-day, toward evening. It is not to be a race, after all; that would be too public. Besides, the Spartan wishes to see you



beaten at your best, and you remember what you told him. However," he added, hastily, "it will be civilly managed."

I stared. "I have cast Myron six paces backward over my shoulder," I exclaimed. "I would not harm her!"

"It is merely this. Whichever of the two is first brought to the knee or forced back across a line is vanquished. Do not be too confident, son; that folly is the bane of Athens. These Spartans are shrewder with their hands than with their heads, and even the girl may have arts that are new to you."

"She shall kneel at my feet." Already I seemed to see her so, and the picture was marvellously attractive. Her good uncle should see it.

It was late in the afternoon when we finally faced each other in the courtyard, my father and Rhyzon the only spectators. The gates were locked; the helots, after drawing the circle of ashes within which we stood, had been dismissed. Gorgo — but neither words nor wax can ever paint Gorgo. Her dress was the same as at the race-course, and shining white. Her feet were bare, and her arms, — which did not look very formidable, though the muscles swelled in soft curves. Her dark brown hair was twined in a massive coil, with loose tendrils flying. And her face — I looked once in her eyes, then dropped mine in a dazzle of rosy flame and violet sparkles. At that moment I hated her, for I felt that I was lost; who could contend with living fire?



I glanced at my father: it was not at me that he was looking, but at Gorgo. The Spartan was shaking with laughter.

“Well, Athenian boy,” she said, her red lips pouting a little, “is it so you do at Athens? Aren’t you going to look at me? When you meet an enemy do you fight without looking?”

I had again lifted my gaze for an instant, but dropped it hastily with a sense of hot sunshine beating upon my brow; and though I felt myself very bitterly her enemy, the word from her lips hurt me. I stood in the midst of the court like a stony Hermes, without a syllable, while her voice flowed on in the mellow Dorian.

“My uncle told me that you were a terrible fighter. I thought you’d be ever so big, and dreadfully ugly. But you’re not either one.” I felt her look roaming over me with critical approval. The Spartan was frowning, but she gave not the smallest heed. “You are rather good-looking for a boy,” she remarked, “if you were not so stupid. I don’t believe you can fight at all, but I thought that *any* Athenian could talk.”

“The girl can do nothing else,” exclaimed my father.

“If the stripling will not contend, I claim the wager as forfeit,” growled Rhyzon.

“I pay no silver for magpie chatter,” retorted my father — “yet the sight of her is perhaps worth a talent. But, Hercules! begin quickly, my son; you discredit me.”



But it was Gorgo who made the beginning. "I could have taken you twenty times at unawares," she cried. "See!" Her swift hand smote my cheek. "Twenty times I could have flung you from the circle; and you would have lain a long time, very still. And now they sneer because I spare you. Boy, with the sulky eyes and folded arms, — you shame me, boy." And again her scornful fingers stung my cheek.

Then anger burned away the spell. "You shall kneel for that," I shouted, and sprang to seize her; but her lithe arms cast me off at every turn. I could as easily have grasped the jet of a fountain; she but sported with my efforts. Conscious of this, I grew wary, feigning awkwardness to put her the more off guard; until at last, in sheer bravado, she clasped her hands above her head, and the same mocking laugh that had floated through the darkness warbled in her throat.

"Catch me, boy, if you can," she dared me.

In an instant my arms were locked about her. Her elbows dropped against my shoulders; her hands were upon my cheeks; for a long breath we both exerted all our force. Then the stark strain relaxed. She lay on my heart quite unresisting, and her arms slid helplessly about my neck.

"Oh!" she sighed, "you are strong." And her warm breath poured against my throat.

"Now!" called my father, shaken from his usual calm.

She raised her head, which had sunk upon my



shoulder. My eyes lost themselves in hers; my sinews slackened. A quick shift brought her hands beneath my chin; with an upward thrust she sprang free. In a flash, as I reeled, she had caught my lifted fingers, and turning shut my arm beneath her own. She looked back at me over her shoulder with the smile of Aurora.

"Sulky boy, you are mine," she cried. "Kneel, boy; it is yours to kneel."

Unconscious of my plight, I almost laughed aloud, her boast that the battle was ended seemed so absurd. With both hands she had pinioned a single arm, while the other — I made a movement, but checked with a gasp of pain.

"Kneel, boy," she repeated; and though she bore down but lightly on my straining elbow, tendons and ligaments could bear no more. I sunk to my knees like a horse reined in with the curb.

"I've won," she proclaimed. "Athenian boy, I've won."

"Gorgo has won," echoed both the men.

I am no Spartan. A tear of the bitterest brine straggled down my cheek. Another followed. She bent toward me; I was still upon my knees.

"I'm sorry, boy," she said, very softly. "Don't — they will laugh. It seems so queer that you cry. Is it just because you had to kneel? Well, then — we'll make that even. There!"

Impetuous Gorgo! She dropped on her knees and kissed away my tear — then leaped up like a crimson flame. It was swift as a gleam from



Athena's ægis; but they saw it. Her uncle rent the air with an oath. My father stared and laughed.

"Be still, wager-maker," he said — "you shall not trouble them. The lad has need of comfort; and that kiss, belike, was as sweet to him as the glitter of gold to thee. Remember, they are but children; they will not meet again, — and that, doubtless, is well."

Again her kinsman cursed.

"Listen!" My father spoke sharply. "You have seen the lad vanquished and weeping; I have seen him kissed by the fairest maid in Sparta, — the son of Hagnon by the daughter of Brasidas! Shall the pretty tale be told? Would you have it sung at the wine in Athens? Enough! Blow no more blasts from your throat, but bring scales, and we will tell out the coin while daylight serves."

The scales were brought, and a table.

"Six thousand drachmas!" muttered my father, opening the bag. "It is the price of a chariot and a full team, koppa-marked; I have been more reckless than Alcibiades himself. But, Spartan, your maids undo your wagers." He glanced toward Gorgo. "By the heavenly Eros, she has given him better than a talent. Rhyzon, the silver is yours, twice over."



## XII.

### *The Daughter of Brasidas*

THE men sat on a bench just under the porch, wholly absorbed in the weighing of the silver; Rhyzon biting a coin now and then, or ringing it on a slab of stone. I had risen now, and we were standing face to face, — Gorgo and I. She glowed like a rose in the sun, while I, more at my ease, gazed with the blunt admiration of boy-hood. Indeed, the tables were turned. For a moment her eyes bore up against mine; then the long, dark lashes fell. A little smile dimpled at the corners of her mouth, like the curling volutes of an Ionic capital. She clapped her hands over her face.

“Oh!” she cried, “I wouldn’t ever have done it — only I was sorry. I never did that before for anybody. But I’d hurt you and I felt so sorry.”

“It was good,” I said, gulping a little but constrained by the truth.

“Was it?” She let fall her hands. “You puckered your face like a baby, Athenian boy.”

“Your uncle was vexed,” I remarked, with superfluous awkwardness.

Again she peered through the veil of her fingers,



but rather saucily now. "It isn't that I care about my uncle. He always scolds, and I always do just as I please. But I oughtn't to have done that."

"It was good," I repeated. This fact had surprised me greatly, and I felt she had a right to know. "Take down your hands, Gorgo."

She kept them up. "I wasn't meaning to make you kneel," she explained. "At first I meant to, but after you caught me I was going to let you win. Don't you know it, boy? Then your father shouted — and all at once it seemed as if I must make you kneel. It was just a trick; you are ever so much the strongest."

"It was a wager; it wouldn't be honest not to win if you could. I don't mind any more about the kneeling. Take away your hands; it's silly to behave like that."

The pink clouds parted a little, but closed again. "You mustn't think it was because I liked you the least bit," she protested, needlessly.

I reflected — for the first time since meeting her. The rules of interpretation for boys didn't seem to apply. "You mean you do like me," I exclaimed. "You can't say you don't; you just say I mustn't think so. You like me, Gorgo. If you don't, say you don't."

"Oh, that's not fair," she cried, in angry panic, half wheeling. "I can say it. I — maybe I did — a little — but I don't now."

"You like me," I insisted, with a wonderful sense of triumph, though I didn't at all understand it.



“Why do you act so? Put down your hands; I want to see you.”

“Why would I put them down? You wouldn’t look at me a while ago. You must have thought I was Medusa. There, then! —” and she flooded me with her rosy light.

The spell of Medusa can never have equalled Gorgo’s; but Gorgo melted, while Medusa froze. Like Semele, I had asked my own undoing. The odds were as suddenly turned as in our combat.

“You are the loveliest that ever was,” I stammered. “I didn’t know girls could be like you.”

She clapped her hands. “They all talk like that,” she said; “the old men, the women, — everybody. ‘Our Gorgo,’ they say, ‘will be like our Helen’ — she was Spartan, too, you know. Then they shake their heads. I’m as tired of hearing that I’m pretty as if it wasn’t true.”

“But it is true. You are lovelier than Alcibiades. I thought he was handsomer than anybody; but he isn’t.”

“Oh, yes! It’s true, of course. Do you mean that Alcibiades — I won’t say what I was going to. Whatever else you’ve got, I don’t think you’ve got good wit, Athenian boy. But your Athens must be a wonderful place.”

“I think Sparta is more wonderful; but I’d rather live in Athens. I wish you lived there.”

“I believe I would like to,” said she. “But, boy, if I lived in Athens your city would not long be free. Do you not know that my father is Brasidas?”



"I like a man who is quick and clever and can fight," I answered.

"Well, the men here can fight, but they're mostly dull. I don't like that old Lycurgus of theirs, nor his laws. He had only one eye, and he couldn't see everything."

"That's just what your uncle said to my father."

She glanced toward the men. A wine-flask lay between them now, but Rhyzon was still eagerly fingering my father's coin, testing every piece.

"The Ephors have two eyes," she said, "and if once they saw him —"

"They would kill him?"

"They would make him divide, — and oh, how he would hate to! My father isn't a bit like him, and my mother was still more different. She liked gold, though, but only for jewels. I like it that way, too," she confessed, with an air that savoured of defiance.

"You ought to have it that way, then — lots of it. You've a right to, if anybody has."

She looked pleased. "You are not a Spartan," she said, "and you don't care about Lycurgus either. I forgot. But here they keep vexing me always, just because I'm so pretty and like pretty things. It is hardly worth while to be pretty here in Sparta."

She was vain, perhaps, but she spoke of her beauty with perfect simplicity. The fact was so obvious; why should she feign?

"I'm not saying that I'd want to be anything else," she added, hastily. "But they trouble me



so — even boys. The worst is the one they call Lysander. He can do almost anything, but he's a dreadful boy, and he swears he'll make me marry him some day whether I want to or not. He's not a pure Spartan, either, — just what we call a mothax, and that means slave blood. I hate him — oh, how I hate him! But he's the one I'm afraid of."

"He never shall have you." And I swelled with sudden anger.

"Indeed, he shall not; but I don't see how you could stop him. He's a terrible enemy — so strong and fierce and crafty. He swears that he'll have your Athens, too. I'd like my father to take it, but I don't want him to have it."

"I shall meet him," I cried. "Gorgo, he is our enemy, yours and mine." And I was glad that at least we had a common enemy.

"Yes," she said, "but don't try to meet him." She went on, hurriedly: "He's the worst, but he isn't the only one that plagues me. There's another — my own cousin, too — that stole a cheese and wanted to give me half." She laughed, and so did I. "My uncle beat him. I don't like cheese anyway — nor boys."

"I don't like the cheeses you have here," I admitted, frankly. "Nor the broth; but I like you better than any girl or any boy."

She looked relieved. "Well," she exclaimed, "I should think it was time you said that. I thought I'd never forgive you for making me say



it first. It was true, though; I simply couldn't say right out that I didn't like you."

"You said you didn't like boys."

"I don't like boys," she declared, speaking very precisely, "but perhaps there's one boy that I like — just a little. Isn't it strange, when we have to be enemies, that we really like each other?"

"They call you like Helen," I ventured, "and Helen ran away with an enemy."

"You don't think" — she began. "Wouldn't it be fun, though!" she concluded, again clapping her hands.

The men looked up, but we were still standing just as they left us, almost a spear's length apart. They resumed their counting and drinking.

"I'm not quite like Helen," she resumed. "I might run from Lysander, but I'd have stayed with the good Menelaus. I wouldn't have run away with Paris."

"I'm not in the least like Paris," I protested, resentfully. "I didn't mean that."

"Yet he was the handsomest man in all the world," quoth she, with her eyes on my sandals.

"He was a rogue."

"And you — are not you an Athenian?"

"If you were a boy — but you are like the beautiful Athena in the new temple," I ended.

She laughed out like sweet water falling in a fountain. "Am I so?" she said. "I am glad, for I like Athena the best of all." Then her voice



fell. "You mustn't say such things," she whispered. "The goddess will be angry."

"She will not be angry," I answered.

And at that Gorgo lifted her eyes, full against mine. I could think of nothing but sunshine and roses. "If I am to be your Athena," she said, softly, "we can never again be enemies, you brave, sweet boy, no matter what these foolish cities do."

"No," I repeated after her, "we cannot be enemies; we can never be enemies, Gorgo." And I tried to say more but could not, for the words seemed too heavy to lift out of my throat.

She shot a quick glance in my face, then looked down; and she spoke very fast, like an orator when the water-clock is almost empty. "We shall have to be friends, then, forever; yes, boy, forever and ever. And I'm glad we're to be such good friends. For what I was weary of hearing from all the rest I love to hear from you. And I wish you could see me dressed in the Ionian fashion, with all the beautiful ornaments of my mother, that came from Ephesus; for then you might think that I was like the goddess indeed. But it isn't thought seemly to wear such things in Sparta; so I only put them on now and then in my chamber. Now listen, Athenian boy. For you are only a boy, and I am just a girl; but that will soon be past. Already the women vex me every day, and keep saying, 'Our Gorgo will soon be of age to marry,' and 'Our Gorgo must make a great marriage.' I know they will try before long to betroth me to some old man



who has been an Ephor, or to some stupid boy who hunts foxes and steals cheese, but belongs, perhaps, to the house of Procles. I don't wish to marry; but if I must, I'm sure I'd like best to be married to you. I don't believe I could marry anybody else. Only you must come and ask — or at least come and take me — when I am ready."

Then I stepped nearer, glancing over my shoulder at the men. "Gorgo," I said "O Gorgo," — and her queer Spartan name clung like honey on my tongue, — "do you truly promise, and will you swear?"

"Yes," she answered, "I swear it by your Athena and ours; and so may I still be like her, and breaking my promise may I become like Medusa. There — is not that enough?" Once more she laughed, but the tinkle in her laugh was gone. "Truly there was no need to make me swear. I rather like your being an Athenian, for my mother was of the blood of Ion — though my uncle swears it is not so. And I don't feel as I did about marrying." Her voice had sunk to a murmur; though she held aloof, it was as if our cheeks had touched. "But remember this, Athenian boy. You will go to your home and perhaps forget; *you* have not sworn. But if you find that you don't forget — if you really want me — you must come to me quickly when I call. O boy from a stranger city, how can we ever meet? All our friends are enemies! all the world will be against us!"

I had stood motionless and dumb, thrilling with



exultation, yet half-dismayed, — this thought of marrying was so new to me. But now my heart gave a throb like the heave of a great horse stumbling beneath his rider. “Hear me, Gorgo! Did I not swear? I swear by the gods who look down from the sky and the gods who reign in the darkness below: when you call I will come, though mountains and storm and battle lie between us; and no Athenian shall hold me back, and no Spartan shall stop me.”

She paled a little, as if my tone frightened her; yet her eyes met mine with a sort of terrified gladness, and a look that was beyond all vows. “Do not boast,” she whispered — for I was very near her now — “do not boast nor swear by the gods as if you defied them, or they will grow jealous; and it is hard to fight against the gods. We shall need their aid, I think: I shall pray to them every day to help us. And I will wait, even though it be for always. They shall marry me to no other; and when it is time I will surely call you.”

Then I forgot myself utterly, and strove to take her in my arms; but she pushed me back with a movement as soft and resistless as when the sea-swell tosses a boat. The men, who had finished their tale of the silver, were looking straight at us. Both were flushed, and the leather flask lay flat. Rhyzon reared heavily, and strode toward me with uneven steps; his thick staff was lifted to strike. But Gorgo with an arrowy rush caught his wrist, and my father thrust his tall form between us.



"Spartan," he said — and the clang of brass was in his voice — "you had best leave the discipline of my son to me. I do not depute it to others."

"But the cub grows wanton with my brother's child," snarled the old taxiarch.

"Whether the boy was wanton, or the girl, or both, I cannot say," answered my father, still in the tones of battle, "for your Spartan Amazons and their fashions are something strange to me. But it is well for you, Rhyzon, that your cudgel hung in mid-air, for had it reached the shoulders of my son the voice of one railer against the peace might perchance have been silenced." And his fingers twitched as they clung on his sword-hilt.

"Then might Athens send us a second embassy to ask burial for the first," sneered Rhyzon.

"They would carry back ill tidings for the hundred and odd noble Spartans who still, in despite of the laws of Lycurgus, eat bread in the city of their captors," retorted my father. "Is not your own son among them, Rhyzon?"

"They had better have died," growled the Spartan; but he lowered his staff.

"Among those idle tales that are told of Sparta," said my father, smiling as he glanced at the heaped-up coin, "is doubtless this, that your sons will die but not yield. It is but a slander; they are not less wise than others. Come, this wine of yours is mixed too strong, and we grow forgetful."

The old man looked at me and laughed. "Let



it pass then. The young wrestler is harmless; our Gorgo can subdue him with a wave of the hand. Has she not proved it — and to your cost? The wine indeed makes us forgetful.”

“It appears to me,” said my father, “that she can subdue him by the glance of her eyes alone. In good truth, she is fair beyond all others, and even though he sought more of her kisses the boy must be forgiven. But of your wine, Rhyzon, we have had too much or too little. It has made you forget that we are guests; more will make us forget that we are enemies.”

We passed in. The Spartan, trusting no helot with his treasure, vanished but soon returned. A great bowl was mixed, tempered with snow from Taygetus, and the odd-looking earthen cups, that held back the lees, were filled many times. “Even the water from a puddle is good from a Spartan cup,” said Rhyzon. “Athenian, you have well paid your score; drink a talent’s worth if you can.”

Of Gorgo I saw no more that evening — or rather, I saw nothing else all night; for again I lay restless, gazing upon the painted darkness, seeing, not visions, but a vision. There was now but one.

And when morning came I had a vision of her very self, brief as a sun-flash on the ripples, yet remembered like the face that bends over us in babyhood. I was crossing the courtyard: a whisper fell and I turned. A small round window opened from an upper chamber, and from its edge,



like the moon not quite at full, peeped the face of Gorgo. Jewels flashed from her brow and her neck, and sparkled through her hair; a great circle of pearls lusted against her cheek; she had put on all for me. She blushed like the dawn upon the mountain snow, and was gone; but a bracelet, warm from her wrist, dropped at my feet. "Keep it for me, boy," she murmured — "my boy" — out of the shadow.

A moment later I was with my father. Our horses were at the gate, and we rode forth from the streets of Sparta. The whole sky was now blushing, like Gorgo; the perfume of spring was in my nostrils, its riot in my blood.

"Just hear the birds singing!"

My father looked at me doubtfully. "I was better pleased to hear the crowing of the cocks," he said. Then, with slow emphasis — "The birds, my son, are but a frivolous and flighty matter, and their speech is but chatter. Listen not to the birds. But if, being young, you must, listen to the Attic birds, not these."



### XIII.

#### *A School of War*

WE had returned with all possible haste, and reached Athens just in time for the great spring carnival. The city — nothing was changed, yet it seemed unfamiliar, as if we had been away for a period of years. I felt much older; and I was older.

The pearls that had once encircled Gorgo's wrist I kept ever near me, but showed them to no one, — not even to Thrasybulus. He cared little for girls; and Critias, when he spoke of them, vexed me.

On the day of the grand procession I watched the maidens with new interest, as they paced by with slow and stately grace, bearing high their baskets. Pale-cheeked, still-eyed, and voiceless, they seemed in no way different from the carvings on Athena's temple, — beautiful, undoubtedly, but I would just as soon have looked upon the marble.

"This is flat," said Thrasybulus, at my elbow, "and I don't care much for that dithyrambic business, either. But to-morrow the plays begin. The comedies are all sorts of fun. Let's go. They say



there's going to be a good one by Aristophanes, — the fellow that gave Cleon such a ripping-up last year. He's after Socrates now, — the snub-nosed man, that plagues people with questions and puzzles the sophists."

"He's a good man," I protested, "and wiser than any of them."

"Good soldier," assented Thrasybulus, lightly, "but not wise enough to mind his own business. All the more fun, if you know him. Let's go. Got an obol? I've three."

"I can't go; my father won't let me see comedies."

"That's just a caning; what of it?"

"When he's angry it's his tongue he strikes with, not a cane; but it hurts worse than even those limber ones that come down with a squish."

That evening, however, my father himself proposed this very thing, and gave me the money.

We started before sunrise, Thrasybulus and I, to get good seats, yet found ourselves crowded far back and rather too near the side wall. Already the dusky hollow was filling fast and hummed with voices. Then, as the sky grew brighter, great baskets of gold and silver were brought to the centre of the orchestra, and poured out in shining heaps beside the altar.

"Tribute," said Thrasybulus, tersely. "Five hundred and sixty talents, this year."

Then the crowns of honour were announced by the herald and laid beside the treasure. I almost



leaped from my seat with delight to hear one proclaimed for my father, — “for his good will and good service, and because he contributed all the expenses of the embassy and has asked no accounting.”

At last, when these and other ceremonies were concluded, the trumpet sounded, the doors of the palace of Priam flew open, and the plays began. I do not remember very clearly about the tragedies. Those presented that day were the “Arrow of Paris,” the “Pyrrhus,” and the “Sack of Troy,” with the “Horse” for an afterpiece. They all seemed intended to magnify the horrors of war, and I found the sentiments rather dull. But the splendid declamation of the actors, ringing to the very limits of the theatre, pleased my ear; and their huge masked figures — grouped as if Phidias himself had ranged them, yet ever shifting to some new pose — held fast my eyes. Better still was the chorus of Trojan soldiers, which marched in with sounding foot-beats in perfect time, chanting a pæan. The melody of their full-toned Doric bore me away to Sparta; and I angrily kicked the back of a cobbler who sat in front of me chattering about the price of corn. The spectators in general were none too attentive. Now and then they applauded a little, but spent much of their time nibbling cakes and fruit. Yet a sudden flurry of snow that whitened the air and chilled our cheeks drove not one from his seat. The actors never paused, and before



the second play was finished the sun was beating down upon us as warm as summer.

It was deep in the afternoon when the "Clouds" of Aristophanes was called, — no such comedy then as that given out by its author the following year, but far more offensive. I was disappointed from the first. The vile little distortions who now flung antics where the sombre gods and heroes of tragedy had just been stalking did not attract me, and as the foul mud of carnival license was daubed over a made-up thing called Socrates, my indignation burned.

"That's a pretty good hit," commented Thrasybulus. It was the passage about measuring flea-tracks.

"You don't know him," I cried. "It is the steps of the soul that he measures. And they laugh him to scorn, and accuse him of everything stupid and vile!" I almost wept with vexation.

"Well, this isn't a law court," retorted Thrasybulus.

But in fact the laughter was not very hearty. Even the irrepressible cobbler shook his head. "Yon Socrates came to my shop one day," he muttered, confidentially. "He talked with me about my trade. He's no fool, like that. I've got on better ever since."

Ranker and ranker grew the orgy of the actors; and I know, from words uttered long afterward, that Socrates was cruelly hurt. It is so hard to live down a clever caricature, no matter how false!



He was not the man to harbour resentment, but to his dying hour he felt the crippling of this wanton injury.

Yet, for the day at least, he turned the insult into triumph. The scene in the "thinking-factory" had been reached, and the mimic Socrates, perched in his swinging basket, was bawling:—

I walk on the air, and take good care of the sun in heaven —

A murmur arose. A ripple of movement ran through the audience as when water is struck by a sudden gust; in an instant all eyes were turned from the wretched parody. Far up in the theatre, in the part where the seats are cut in the living rock, the true Socrates had risen to his feet. For a moment he stood alone, in silent protest, looking about him with that serenity which nothing could disturb. Then Alcibiades, who had striven to hold him down, rose beside him with defiant glances. Critobulus, scarcely less fair of face, sprang up also; old Crito rose, and little black Chærephon, and ragged Antisthenes, and many another. And at that we all rose with one motion, and turning our backs on the actors cheered for Socrates.

The play went on after a little, but it was dead. Its failure, as everybody knows, was chiefly due to this act of Socrates; and finally old Cratinus, in spite of his purple nose, won the prize with his "Wine-Flask." Some of the judges, they say, were pledged to Aristophanes, but the "Clouds" got none of the ballots.



This incident brought me again to the feet of Socrates, and from that time forth I was often in his company. My father was not greatly pleased at this.

“My son, you would do better to learn of the regular instructors.”

“They are useless. They can teach me nothing that I do not know already.”

“It is absurd,” he exclaimed. “Since when are you become so wise?”

“It is not that I am wise; yet what I say is true. Consider, father. If I had never known — well, for example, what we call redness, could they teach me its nature?”

“No,” he said, presently, “they could not teach that to a man born blind.”

“No more can they teach the colours of right and wrong to a soul that has never known them; nor of truth and of falsehood.”

“But how is Socrates any better?”

“He alone can make the soul remember.”

My father paused, so long that I feared he was offended. “You have the best of it, lad,” he said, at last. “Some new tricks of the tongue you have certainly learned — or, perchance, ‘remembered.’ Go, then, to your Socrates; for if, like the youngster in the play, you return to beat your father, it will not be with a club, I think.”

I thanked him.

“But, my son, along with your other rememberings, remember this. These conceits of the sophists



are like wine. A little may be taken with profit and makes keen the understanding, but they who take too much are made fools. You are not to infer," he concluded, "that I hear these quirks and phrases now for the first time, though I think but lightly of them."

So I joined the company that followed the great converser through the streets and markets, or drew around him with eager questionings under the porticos. Many a strutting sophist I saw tripped by his simple-seeming words, and many a citizen striding away in anger while we laughed in chorus. Others there were who did not refuse to know their own hearts, — who learned to love with supreme devotion the tongue that always asked for truth and the words that searched the soul as rain searches the soil. Few loved, and many hated, but all were astonished; the charm of his speech was such that even wounded pride came back to listen. So his fame went abroad; an oracle proclaimed his wisdom; he was better known than Nicias or Alcibiades. Those who came to our city asked to be shown the way to Socrates no less than to the theatre and the temples. And I — although I have heard from his lips far more than has ever been recorded, to tell it is a task too heavy for me. Some little part I may — I must — essay hereafter. Not now.

And of the events that were passing in those years I shall say but little, for as yet I had little share in them. They are all set down in the history writ-



ten by surly Thucydides, — whom Cleon had banished, not long before, for watching his gold mines so closely that he forgot to watch Amphipolis. So Brasidas stole a march — and the town at the end of it. And now Brasidas had fallen before that same Amphipolis; and Cleon, too, victim of his own presumption. It was a strange turn of fate that has linked those names together: Cleon, the brawler, and Brasidas, the — to me, the father of Gorgo. I thought often of her grief.

“The fires are out,” said my father, when the news came. “We shall have peace.” And the peace was soon made, Nicias getting much more credit than he deserved. Then Alcibiades tried his hand at politics, and of course there was fighting forthwith. He fretted the Spartans to madness with his tricks, and raced all over Peloponnesus making trouble. Our treaty, I believe, was to hold for fifty years! I doubt that it held in strictness for as many days; and soon we had concluded another, quite at odds with it, allying ourselves with Argos. That was for a hundred years, I believe! and it lasted near a third as many months before it was interrupted — long enough to get the war well under way again, anyhow.

Meanwhile my military training had begun; for of course I was to be a soldier. First I served with others of my age in the frontier forts, raiding over the mountains until my limbs were as hard as bone, and I could tramp all day under heavy arms yet charge at a full run for the finish. I learned to



watch at night and march at dawn; to drink from a pool and eat what I could get; to sleep on the rocks, and love it better than a bed. Old Lamachus was our trainer, — mounted on a borrowed horse, too poor to own his boots, but a right good captain. He drilled us in phalanx, four deep, until we stepped and struck as one man, even on rough ground. He massed us in column and made us charge full tilt against timber barricades, until we could drive our lances through heavy plank and endure the shock. He taught us to wheel, to reverse, to fall in or out, to open or close, until such acts became like an instinct. It was my father who trained me in horsemanship, but Lamachus made me a hoplite. The order of a sea-fight I learned later.

After that I served under Alcibiades in Achæa and elsewhere. I was now eighteen, and had been in training about eighteen months. We mastered our trade quickly in those days, and young blood was oftenest spilled. Mantinea was my first pitched battle.

Ours was a motley array, mostly Argives and Mantineans; we of Athens numbered but a thousand hoplites, with a troop of horse. We stood massed on a rugged hill: it was madness to attack us there; but King Agis was under heavy censures and eager to blot out his shame. Already the Spartan front was within a stone's throw, and our lances quivered with expectation. Then the advancing column shook; the pipes whistled discords; we were so near



that I knew the harsh voice of old Rhyzon as it broke forth from behind the wall of shields:

“King, will you heal one hurt by another?”

A murmur of passing signals ran through the line. They drew back, step by step; they wheeled; they were in full retreat. We almost burst from the ranks to rush upon them, but the officers held us in check. As the Spartans crossed the level field and passed from view, a loud outcry arose from among the Argives: our commanders were fools, cowards, traitors!

Surely the soldiers were right. One sharp charge down the slope and the enemy were routed — unless we lost our formation! That was the danger. No, our generals were merely cautious, — but it was hard to bear. And caution is so often a capital mistake in war!

It was evident now that the enemy would never meet us here, and the generals, cowed by clamour, led us into the plain below. All day and all night we stood under arms, but we saw no Spartans. Then, as the mists were melting and the sun toiled up from behind the mountains, we suddenly saw them before us. But they were much more surprised than we. They were in marching order: they had no thought of finding us there. Yet there was no confusion; no panic. The pipes began to sound, and almost under our spears they fell into line like the pieces on a draught-board. I admired them then, as never before.

We should have charged on the instant, but our



officers, all along the front, wasted time in speeches. "For the ancient sovereignty of Argos" — echoed in my ears from the right centre. "Soldiers of Athens," shouted our own Nicostratus, — standing so near his death, — "already you rule the sea; break the line before you and the land also is yours."

Even then the enemy's phalanx was not fully closed. A gap showed in the part that faced the Mantineans, and two or three platoons were counter-marching in the rear. Whatever this movement meant it was never completed. We were close upon them, charging with a fury that tossed our dense array. I noted, too, that we had swerved to the right, so that they much outflanked us, for each man hugged the shelter of his neighbour's shield; and the caution of Lamachus flashed through my mind, — always to aim a running charge somewhat leftward.

Then shields and lances crashed, with a shock like the meeting of triremes. A splintering shaft gashed my cheek; a pike-head ground through my buckler and grided past my side; the man behind me shrieked. We hung straining, like bulls with locked horns. We were ranked eight deep — I in the second line — and the thrust from behind and before so shut the files that the rim of my shield was jammed against my throat and my body crushed into its hollow. The wounded man writhed on my shoulders but could not fall; his blood flowed down my limbs; and all the while I was gripping my spear



like a vise, and felt its unseen point, ten feet distant, crunching on flesh. With a mighty impulse we surged forward, — then back; we were losing ground.

Cries of triumph were sounding from our Manti-neans on the right; but for us there was no victory. The Argives next us were fleeing before the Spartan pikes; the flash of iron was on both our flanks. Then came the rattle of charging hoofs, and I heard my father's war-shout ringing above the battle. The Spartans checked; we drew back; they did not pursue. Breathless, reeking with sweat and blood, convulsed with the agony of conflict, still holding our formation though with ragged ranks, we retired from before those unconquerable pikes, the iron wall of Sparta. Well were we guarded by the knights of Athens, who won new laurels that day.

Under the burial truce we took up more than a thousand corpses, — two hundred belonging to our own division, with both our generals, Nicostratus and old Laches. Such was the price of defeat. What the Spartans had paid for victory we never knew; for when we repaired to the field with our carts and mattocks, their dead were gone. But Sparta was herself again. Men sneered no more about the braves at Pylos.



#### XIV.

##### *The Bow of Golas*

“**F**IVE minas? It is no better than to sell him to the mines. It will be twelve minas — yes. Does the noble Greek desire a present? See! he is strong — he is like a bull of the mountains. And he shoots with the bow — so well.”

I was lounging through the slave-market in Piræus, with others of my kind, — quite gaily dressed and with a bubble of wine in the blood. For I was leading a rather fast life just now; after my hard campaigning I felt the need of relaxation. And I had found myself, without much reason, a bit of a hero on my return. Alcibiades had given me good words, far beyond my deserts; and it was something to be my father's son after that cavalry charge at Mantinea. Nor did my father frown very sternly on my pleasures; he gave me plenty of money and few rebukes. “The wine is good to wash away blood and sweat,” he said, — “only do not drown yourself.”

So I was spending freely on horses and banquets, and even diced a little, though I found that a witless sport. I liked the cottabos better, and at eight



paces could make the brass tinkle and ring with every cast of the wine, — which pleased me, for this was the omen of luck in love, and I thought of Gorgo. To the rest it seemed but wasted skill, for I was utterly careless of the women they raved or jested over; the beauty of Gorgo had so dazzled me that if ever I looked on others her dancing, glowing image blotted them out. I have always been glad of that. Yet, though I now and then glanced at her bracelet and wondered vaguely as to its fellow, she had little place in my thoughts in those days. I would have made small scruple, I presume, at any pleasure, but happily not all things pleased me. High-bred horses were my pet extravagance. If Socrates chanced to turn a sharp-edged comment on my follies, I looked at his bare feet and smiled. I loved him, but I did not love his way of life; and he was certainly no judge of horse-flesh.

Well, I had come from the racing-stables of Pasias and was strolling through the slave-market, as I have said, when I heard that reptile voice. I would have known it in Babylon or Memphis; yet when I looked up, the speaker seemed so mean and withered and insignificant that I doubted my ears. Only an instant, though; for at his side stood the Nubian, big and ugly, just as I remembered him, — not himself on sale, as was my first impression, but shaking a heavy whip. The creature on the selling-block was white-skinned, though sun-scorched and shaggy. He stood bowed like an ape,



with long arms drooping below his knees. His legs were set in thick gyves; his eyes glared with untamable fierceness; on his back was a weave of scars like the print of a fisher's net on the sand.

"Yes — it will be twelve minas," repeated the Syrian, — "with the bow. It is wonderful, the bow — not like those you see."

"Hercules!" simpered Callias, in his affected way — for he was the bargainer. "It is but a herald's staff. Twelve minas! Do you think you are selling me a right-trace-horse for the races?"

I stepped nearer. "If he shoots let us see his shooting," I said. "Knock off those fetters."

The Syrian did not know me; I had quite outgrown his recollection. But he turned the colour of dead grass at the mere suggestion. "You would unchain Golas! The young citizen is rash — he does not know. It is a peril; he is so fierce, this Golas. It is terrible to see. And with his bow — he would kill all here, all."

"A fine purchase!" I sneered — "A wild beast, with barbed arrows by way of claws!"

"I will not take him at twelve obols," cried Callias, drawing back.

"Of what breed is the slave?" I asked the Syrian.

"It is a Carduchian. They are of the mountains beyond Tigris. The Great King cannot subdue that people. Many were killed at his taking; and he has burst his bond — yes, twice; but he had not the bow."



“Let me see it — the bow.”

It was indeed more like a staff: a thick rod, almost straight and longer than a man. It was of unknown wood, yellowed with use like old ivory. At the grasp it was cased with a section of snake-skin, drawn on tightly; but for this and the cord, which hung loose with a sliding loop, I should never have thought it a bow. I tried to strain it: the limbs, though scanty tapered, were very elastic, yet as stiff as steel. It sprung from my hands and rapped me sharply. The slave eyed it hungrily.

“Syrian,” I exclaimed, “I will buy — at your price, twelve minas. But first I will see this bow bent and an arrow darted from it; and no slave of mine shall drag a chain.”

It happened that I had with me Seuthas, a Scyth of my father’s troop, skilful with the bow after the manner of his nation; I had summoned him that day because he was also a clever judge of the points of horses. “If this savage of yours can outshoot my archer here, it is a sale,” I said, “not otherwise.”

“I would sell,” the trader answered, slowly, “for it is my price; but I dare not break the fetter. To give him the bow — it is madness.”

“None will buy without proof. You have been lying: the bow is not a bow, and the savage is not an archer. Come: give proof, or I will have you beaten from the market. Why fear? Is not Pardocas by you?”

He recoiled like a stag when it scents an ambush.



"You have the name? You have been before at the market; but the old merchant has forgotten."

"We have met," I said.

"Who are you?" he cried. "It was surely long ago — yes, long. For the name, it is changed. He is not now Pardocas; he is Ephaltas now."

"Loose me the slave. I will see a shot."

"That Golas! It is even a peril that he has his hands!"

"Has he any knowledge of our tongue?"

"Like a dog: he can understand a little, but when he would speak it is barking."

I turned: "Golas," I said, speaking very quietly, "will you come to me and be my slave, and go with me always where I lead you? Will you take the bow and keep it, but shoot only as I say, and kill no one unless I bid you?" Our eyes met, — his no longer angry, but full of question and like a dog's indeed. Then he fell prone, crawled to my foot and kissed it.

"Hail, King of the Carduchians!" laughed Callias; and the rest joined. "A bold stroke and a good venture," Critias added. "The fellow will obey him utterly. Such servants are useful. Callias, you have lost."

I gave the bow to Golas, who clutched and stroked it lovingly. I called a smith to unrivet the fetters.

"The bow goes not with the slave," said the Syrian. "It is a wonderful bow; it will be three minas for the bow."

"But you offered all to Callias for twelve minas!"



“Yes — but not to you.”

I glanced at the smith. “It is but a stick. If you claim it, take it.” Golas stepped free; we all smiled.

“I have yet the arrows,” said the trader, craftily.

“Bring them, then,” I broke forth. “It shall be three minas more for the bow, and the cord, and the arrows, and the feathers that are upon them. But if you still raise a quibble about the points and the barbs, Golas himself shall reason with you.”

The arrows were brought. They were full two cubits long, curiously feathered and headed with hammered iron. Golas caught them up joyfully and shook them from the snake-skin quiver. He sunk on his knees before them and poised each shaft on his finger, rolling it under his thumb, here and there fingering a point or smoothing a plume. Then, rising, he pointed to my knife, — a keen, thin blade of Tyrian temper. Some drew back at that; but though puzzled, I gave it up at once. He lifted it to his face, and with quick strokes slashed the ragged tangle from his cheeks and chin.

“Now,” said I, “let them shoot, — first for strength of cast. Aim high and toward the sea.”

The bow of Seuthas was of horn, short but stout, with a double crook. He fitted his shaft, drew to his breast, and let fly with a stinging snap; the arrow soared against the blue. For an instant Golas watched its flight, — then, dropping the bow-heel to his foot, set the cord with an upward thrust. The weapon purred in his grasp; a long shaft lay



across it. Suddenly he stood erect, his huge arm rose at full stretch, the straining thong met his cheek. The great arc pulsed, and the springing string sang like a lyre, but all in one deep note; and with that came a whisper, but we saw no bolt. We lifted our eyes. The arrow of Seuthas had reached its height, hovering just at the turn; and there it splintered in the sky, tumbling in fragments from mid-air to the harbour's edge; while, after an interval, a white spurt leaped up far out on the water.

We were all panting, short of breath; I had bitten my lip to bleeding. "A chance," cried Callias, "a mere chance!" and others echoed it.

"A shrewd purchase," said Critias, — "the slave that commits such an accident. It might chance again."

"Will any one of you back his doubt with a wager?" I demanded.

"Yes: the price against the slave," said Callias.

"Not I: but a simple talent? or two, if you like?" He was silent.

"Wager no wagers on this vile horn," cried Seuthas, flinging down his bow. "There it may lie till it bleaches; I will not shoot another shot. The ill-made ox-yoke jarred as I loosed, and the arrow clapped and wagged as it left the string, — enough to crack any shaft." We laughed. "Well," he said, crossly, "that is not all. There is magic, doubtless; I have heard of the like on the plains. I will shoot no more matches with a dumb wizard — not with any bow, nor at any price."



"There needs none," I answered. "Golas has proved all in one, — strength, swiftness, sureness, eye and arm, bow and shaft. I ask no more."

"Take your Golas, then. But remember, young man, the tricks of jugglers are of no avail in fight. One good horse-archer is worth ten croaking magicians."

"Unstring your tongue, Seuthas," I said, "and shut your words in their quiver. No one questions that you are as good as any centaur to ride or shoot, or brawl. You will not lack service in these days. My purchase is my own affair. I am satisfied."

"My money — I have not yet the silver," whined the Syrian. "Bel! I have but thrown him away — that Golas. May Moloch burn me for a child of folly! Had I known, it should have been three talents — three for the asking."

"Cowards learn little and brutes less," I said, "and the smoke of Moloch is in your eyes already. But it is true, — you are getting less than your dues. I may be minded to give you more. Come."

We went together to the money-tables of Archestratus, then managed by Pasion, his slave, whom he afterward set free. There my father had a large credit, and I paid the Syrian in full before witnesses.

"But you promised more," he complained.

"In three days I will keep my promise — if you care to wait. Syrian, a debt is always paid. The gods keep strict accounts. They are usurers, too, and after a long time there is interest."



"I think you talk like the sophist; it is empty words. But I will wait — yes — three days; but now I have other business."

"Not yet: your business is with me. This Moloch — you are his servant? He dwells in your land?"

"Yes, Moloch is of Syria. He is my god. But I spoke no disrespect of the others," he added, uneasily. "I have even made a gift to your Apollon, for an oracle."

"And what was his word?"

"I will not tell you that; the oracle is not to be told."

"Moloch is angry; he has blinded you, Syrian."

"It cannot be: I have done service to Moloch. Yes — three infants, still of the milk —"

"Be silent! the gods of Greece will hear you. How many were slain by Golas at his first taking? But I will tell you. There are nine arrows in the quiver, and one in the harbour."

"There were twelve: one was broken, and one passed through and was lost; it was the last of all. But what is this?"

"In three days I will send Golas with what is due you."

"Golas! You are speaking some treacheries. I will go."

"Do not run — unless you can outrun an arrow. Look into my eyes. Have you no remembrance of the little son of Hagnon?"



“You are that one!” His jaw sunk, and his mouth hung open like an idiot’s.

“Three times we have met, Syrian, and each time you have done me service. It was not your wish but the god so willed it, — not Moloch — he is far away and cannot aid you — but that mightier god who holds the skies of Hellas. For each friend that you have brought me I give a day, — and on the third day, Golas. He will come with quiver and bow, free of hand and foot. He knows your den: I doubt you will decide to wait. And if ever again I see your face in Athens — Golas asks but a sign.”

The fellow fled with the terror of arrows stinging at his back, clutching his pouch yet spilling silver as he ran. The Nubian was gone already. Again they appeared for a moment, close by the harbour. Golas glanced after them; then at me. He stood bow in hand, with fingers nestling in the plumes that crowned his quiver; but he made no movement.

On the third day, at noon, I led him to the door. “Go,” I said. “Seek the Syrian in all his holes.” And I laid my finger on an arrow.

His face brightened; but he paused. “Gola come back?” he grunted.

“You will come back. You are to serve me always.”

He cast off the mantle I had given him, and ran down the street with a crouching lope. Late that evening he again stood before me, impassive, not an arrow gone from his sheaf.



“Speak,” I commanded.

That was harder to him than any miracle of the bow. “Not find,” he managed to articulate.

“Well,” I said, “we will wait.”



## XV.

### *Apteryx*

**A**PTERYX was the only man, of all I ever knew, who could make any stand against Socrates. In sarcasm I believe he excelled him. In boldness of thought and speech — a merciless probing of all that men hold true — he was somewhat like him. But Socrates, though great in question, was great in faith; and Apteryx had faith in nothing. The sweet sanity of Socrates he lacked altogether. Apart from the weird and sinister eloquence which sometimes gushed from his lips he had no charm, nor was he in any way lovable or helpful. Sophist, cynic, poet, madman — I know not what to call him. But the manner of our meeting was this.

I had just parted from Alcibiades, newly returned from the massacre at Melos. We had almost quarrelled.

“Men will think us the foes of mankind,” I had exclaimed. “First Mytilene barely escapes; then all that bloody business at Corcyra; then Scione, and now Melos! It is not even politic.”

“It is war,” he said, impatiently. “Come, I am



the most magnanimous fellow in Athens. I have taken one of their women to wife."

"After killing her husband!"

"Do you hold with Socrates against killing?" he sneered.

"No; I would kill for need, not for greed."

"Well, there was need, then. We had to make room for our own colonists somehow. You are impractical, Theramenes."

I turned from him in some disgust.

"Must we dispute over a few hundred wretched islanders?" he cried, with unwonted forbearance in his tone.

"No," I answered, "we will not dispute; but leave me alone awhile."

"We didn't kill quite all of them," he called after me. "There goes one now; don't tread on him, soft-heart. Pray for me, if you are going to the temple."

I had almost tripped upon a shabby little distortion who was just beginning to climb the long stairway of the Acropolis. He was less than three cubits in height, bent like a wrestler's scraping-hook; he made slow progress, crawling past my legs much as a crippled bug drags himself along the sand. I looked down on his hump with loathing; yet with pity, too — the more, if he was really a Melian.

"Who are you?" I asked, drawing back till my mantle swung clear of him.

He stopped and looked up edgewise. "Nothing,"



he panted. "Nothing at all, and unlucky enough to know it. Hence, like your modest Socrates, I have been accounted wise."

"Has nothing, then, a name?"

"It has nothing else. Must you of Athens have that too?" The voice was high-pitched, but rather musical.

"Only as one takes the hand."

"Just so: you would not keep it. I, therefore, will keep it."

"It is a convenience for one who would talk."

"What — a name? Quite the contrary: it is at times most inconvenient. In Athens, especially: your Socrates may yet discover that." He resumed his hobble upward. "Why talk? It is but the shadow of smoke. Still, there is nothing better: to talk is amusing. What you call acting is no more real, and your men of action cause an illusion of pain; of such is that fair phantom Alcibiades who left you but now. For the sake of talk, then, you may call me Apteryx."

I smiled. "Had you wings they would doubtless be of much service, — and light their load. But since you are wingless my slave shall assist you." For I felt that we owed the man some show of kindness.

"I shall see the aspect of the temple sooner so," he replied, "but there will be no thanks. For, indeed, I shall still be where I was."

"The Sphinx! What riddle for the revels is this?"



"All places are one," he responded, "and the things that come and go move not and are not. So, at least, some of those reputed wise have told me. For myself, I hold that anywhere is nowhere."

I bit my lip to keep from laughing; I thought him crazed, as perhaps he was. "And is to-day yesterday, and also to-morrow?"

"No day ever passed that was not all three. Or rather, it does not pass. The visions pass, but time is changeless. Do you not know that it is always now?" And here I laughed aloud. "Try that for a riddle at your revels, young man. But no reveller ever guessed it, though what is seen in wine is like the faces that grin and wrinkle at us from troubled water."

"The solid earth is perhaps a delusion also?"

"That least of anything. I love to lie upon it and clutch it with my hands when my brow is hot and I am weary of thinking. Yet I have stood upon it in dreams, and with the dream it flew away; and it will again fly away with the dream which you, I presume, call life. The earth? It will be nothing to me then; it is nothing to me now." He had ceased his clambering, damp with sweat. "The aid you promised," he added, "is, I conceive, still more a delusion."

I signed to Golas, who lifted him in his arms. The dwarf, with a sigh of relief, sunk back and gazed at the sky. "It gives room to the eyes," he said. "I do not see it often. It is good for the eyes."



"That too is doubtless a delusion," I remarked.

"The sky and all that dwell therein," he answered. And at this I was truly shocked.

"You speak as an atheist!"

"I have told you already that I am nothing. Are you offended? Let the slave cast me down this marble ladder, and I shall be less than a seeming."

But Golas made no move to set him down until we were within the great hall of the temple, breathing the fragrant fumes of the altar in full view of the resplendent goddess whose golden helmet almost touched the panels of the ceiling. I looked upon her, as I always did, with loving awe, — and a memory of Gorgo. At length Apteryx spoke.

"Well," he said, querulously, "the pavement is of good stone justly fitted, but I care not to inspect it further."

Then Golas again took him up. He lay curled like a ball, resting his head against the slave's shoulder, and so gazed long and earnestly.

"Fine gold and fair ivory, well wrought," he said, at last, "and a face to remember. I shall pray to her to look upon me often."

"Pray to her!" I exclaimed. "Do you believe, then, in Athena?"

"I believe in visions," he answered, "and as I walk I shall often see her face painted upon the gravel."

As we came out, that other image of Athena — the brazen goddess whose temple was the sky — blazed in our eyes like a figure carved in fire; while



the columns all about us glowed and trembled in the sunset. It seemed unreal; the spell of this man was upon me. I looked down on the city; it lay in a stain of crimson, blotted with shadows. A sea-eagle sailed on the left, dusky against the horizon; the air chilled as it gloomed; I felt the forebode of evil. Then came the impulse of prayer; I lifted my hands to the towering statue.

"Goddess," I cried, "Protectress of this ancient city of thy name, forget not thy people."

"You pray amiss: he prospers whom the gods forget." The cold, thin voice fell on my ear like the stroke of a knife. "Yet let him not prosper too greatly, or they shall again take heed of him."

"Scoffer and sceptic! Would you bar me from the grace of Athena with impious words unseasonably uttered?"

"Pray, then, for justice on your city. Dare any in Athens make that prayer? But the undue favour of the gods is ever a curse to mortals, and the land that is too much blessed of heaven shall lie desolate."

"You are mad. You speak blasphemous contradictions. Have you not denied the gods altogether?"

"I have thought better of it. I find that I must needs believe in gods, for I cannot conceive that men should be such fools unless there are gods to dement them. Besides, even though the gods be shadows they sometimes send bad dreams. I have not denied that they afflict us with dreams."



“You are mad indeed; yet only Socrates can answer you.”

“That is my wish. Take me now to your wonderful sophist,” he commanded; and I obeyed as if I had been his bond-servant.

I knew, as it happened, that Socrates had promised Callias to sit at wine that night in the great house built by Hipponicus in Piræus. Golas carried the dwarf all the way, grunting a little, for the distance was more than forty stades. I was certain that the affair was quite informal, else the chief guest would have shunned it; so I threw a drachma to the porter, who, recognising me, made no scruple to let us pass. Six or eight were at table, and the wine was already pouring. Callias, always prepared for the uninvited when Socrates was present, was profuse in his welcome and at once divined that I had brought a curiosity of some sort. He called for cushions, and Apteryx was so propped in a chair that he could lean back and see the company. For a moment all stared at him, then courteously turned away their glances. The wine flowed again, but the flow of words was checked.

“What weather is Jove making?” asked Callias, presently, to relieve the silence, — “fair or foul?”

“He gathers clouds and will rain before morning,” I answered.

“They are fools who speak thus,” broke in Apteryx. “For me, it rains and all is said. It is the nature of rain to fall, even as it is the nature of wind



to blow, or of men to utter nonsense; and Jove is useless."

"It is only a form of speech," I said. But none heeded me; all were looking at Socrates.

"I hear," said he, "that our friend Theramenes has lately bought a slave, and paid a great price because the fellow was skilful with the bow. He was foolish; for since it is the nature of the bow to shoot there needed no archer. The Athenians, too, are doubtless foolish to enact laws and appoint officers for their enforcement; or are the laws of the gods so different from these that they need no author?"

"I deny those laws," piped the dwarf. "What you call the law of the gods is but the nature of things, — nature itself. And all things act according to their nature. I say again, Jove is useless."

"It rather appears to me," said Socrates, "that you have given Jove a new name. He is now, as it seems, become a goddess, and we must hereafter bow the knee to Nature. But tell me this: in all the wonderful frame of the universe, so perfect in every part, so far excelling anything ever devised by men, do you see no evidence of wisdom?" And here he fell into his usual manner of questioning. "What, pray, would you regard as the marks of intelligence in anything planned by men?"

"I have observed no such marks of intelligence," said Apteryx.

"Well," said Socrates, smiling, "setting aside the works of men, since you hold them in such con-



tempt, is not the body at least a contrivance worthy of admiration, ingeniously planned, as if by some one meaning good to man?"

"Mine is not." He looked up with his sidelong glance. "And yours, perhaps, might admit of improvement," he added, sourly.

A sudden laugh sputtered round the table. "You have scored upon me," said Socrates, joining heartily. "Yet if the gods have been unkind to us in this, to you at least they have made some amends by the gift of wit; and I doubt much that you would exchange it even for the beauty of Alcibiades."

"I have had a surfeit of your Alcibiades. Yet I commend him: unless he dies too soon of luxury or rashness, he shall be an avenger. Alcibiades! trailing his robes of purple dabbled in blood! I would not be such as he for the graces of Apollo," screamed the little Melian. And as he spoke I perceived that his face had, after all, a sort of blasted beauty, most unlike the wholesome homeliness of Socrates, — who resumed:

"I was wrong in seeking to lead you thus, by questions. You have turned them well, but I fear we are learning nothing. Speak your message; we will listen without interruption."

"Do you mean that you would listen to a sceptic's creed?" he said, sullenly. "Then call the Eleven and make ready the hemlock. You will hear blasphemies."



The face of Socrates was full of pain, — but, “Speak,” he said, “whatever you think is true.”

The dwarf flung back among the cushions for a clearer view. “You are honest,” he cried, — “by all the phantom gods, you are honest, and yet no fool. I will speak the sheer truth as I see it; and for a contrast, I will begin like the poet. In the beginning was Nothing. And of Nothing, Nothing was brought forth; of the Father of Nothing, Nothing was begotten. That is the only true theogony; Hesiod was crazy with the word-madness.”

We were choking over our cups; the eyes of Socrates twinkled. “Before we proceed further in this matter,” he said, “let us send to Delos.”

“For an oracle, Socrates?” asked Callias.

“For a man to do the diving. They are said to be very competent, and our occasion demands the best. The oracle we have already.”

“It is the only rational cosmos,” insisted Apteryx. “Nothing alone requires no explanation.”

“Existence is the problem, I think. Nothing indeed explains — nothing. Enough, or we shall all have need of hellebore.”

“I worship the Shadow god, and none other. As for Jove, I deem him less than Homer, who was his creator; but Jove created not Homer, nor aught else, save vapours in the minds of priests and poets, — whence, perhaps, he is justly called ‘cloud-compelling.’”

“Tell us more of your cosmos,” I entreated him.

“What is it that we see on every side?”



“A tissue of dreams and shadow, embroidered with follies, stitched with pain. It hangs before us like a luminous veil, lighted by a lamp that will soon be darkened: see, the flame flutters in the wind already. Then all is dark.”

“God forbid!” exclaimed Socrates. “The soul that speaks thus is sick with death.” And Callias signed to a slave, who pricked up the wick.

But Apteryx talked on: “Is not this wine which you have set before me solid to the eye, yet yielding to the touch? Is it not biting upon the tongue, yet sweet in the nostrils? Does it not cool the lips, yet heat the blood? And that which is one thing, yet of which every sense tells a different tale, cannot truly exist.”

“At least,” said Socrates, “we do not know it as it truly is, but only as it appears; so much may be conceded.”

“Apteryx, tell us more,” I said.

“Are you not yet satisfied? Would you study the pattern of a world of phantoms?”

“I would learn the pattern.”

“Know, then, that every seeming is exactly as it seems. It cannot be otherwise; and so, in their hearts, all men believe, however much they profess other doctrines. The philosophers are fools.”

“Do you not hold with Anaxagoras that the figure of the earth is round? For he says that he has seen its shadow on the moon.”

“Do olives grow treeless, and do men gather them spinning in the air? It is more absurd than



to deem that a certain Atlas bears this bubble universe upon his much deluded shoulders, himself without foothold; or that Jove swings all by a golden chain from the airy pinnacle of heaven. Yet down and up are not more manifest than is the truth. For this semblance of earth is altogether boundless, even as time and space that are its elements, extending ever downward without end. However deep thou diggest thou shalt find but clay and rock and gravel; though thou burrow on forever, thou shalt find naught else. How, then, hath it need of anything to rest upon, resting ever upon itself, — itself the base of all? For to look upon the earth and think otherwise is not only to dream, but to dream emptiness.”

“I find little profit in these speculations,” said Socrates wearily. “In what way do they lead us to a better life?” But Apteryx fluted on as if he had not heard, his head sunk in his breast, his voice like that of one reciting verses.

“Nor hath this earth any verge or limit, as some allege, babbling in words void of meaning. Go where thou wilt, thou shalt still find the figment of hills and plains and waters, and the phantom sun and the stars shall appear to rise and set, and the changing shapes of cloud shall drift over thee. Many spectres thou mayest see, of strange monsters and men yet stranger, and new plumage of birds, and herbs of unknown growth. These, and such as these, mayest thou find in variety infinite, — not even the wind-flitting wings of Hermes might show



thee all their aspects. But though thou wander amid these visions for countless æons, becoming deathless while nations pass from nothingness to nothingness and forests lose themselves beneath their dropping leaves, still shalt thou find the earth beneath and the sky above. From under the sky thou mayest not flee out, nor from off the earth. Dream not of it; for even dreams are chained to the earth from which they spring." He paused. Not a cup was lifted; no voice was raised.

"And all this," he continued, "may every man prove for himself when he will, making trial according to his strength and ever finding it thus; but the contrary none has ever proved by any test, nor ever may. And herein these fancies of a vain philosophy are like that other phantasy of a life after death, which some prate about."

"Do you deny that also?" said Socrates.

"I do not wish it for myself," he answered. "I should surely weary." His tone was again dry and hard.

"But for others — those who desire it."

"To fools I concede it; for all know that folly is immortal."

"What, then, becomes of us?" I asked. It was my old, unanswered question.

"Have you never looked in the blazing pyre? A white crumble of bone and evil odours."

"That is the body; what of the rest?"

The lamp, as it chanced, stood near; he drew it toward him and blew it out.



“The rest is darkness,” he cried, shrilly, through the gloom; and we heard the tinkle of his goblet. His voice again sounded:

“This to you, Socrates, true seeker for the truth, — may you never be so cursed as to find it. And this to you, son of Hagnon, that sought to befriend me, — may the phantom gods bestow upon your phantom soul the delusion that it is blessed.” Then the voice rose in anger. “And to you who have laughed me to scorn and to you who have slaughtered my people, — may dreams of disaster and nightmare terrors and all the black spectres of Cocytus be about you; and would that you might indeed become immortal, to enjoy these dreams forever.”

The goblet crashed on the board; Callias shouted loudly to his servants; but when lights were brought the sinister guest was gone.

We all turned to Socrates. The wine in our cups was flavourless, and what we had drunk lay cold within us.

“Speak to us, Socrates,” I said. “Speak some good word and break this spell of evil; for we sit among his phantoms.”

“I know well,” he answered, humbly, “that I understand nothing of the things above and the ways of the gods, nor yet of the things below, nor even of what I touch; of matters such as these no true knowledge has been granted me. And many times, when I think upon the fables that men tell and upon philosophy, the gods themselves seem dim and lost in clouds. But that in and above and behind them



there is a power which makes right better than wrong, and stronger and certain to prevail, and shapes all for good, — that I know beyond any word of priest or seer or prophet. And I know that a world thus ruled by law is not a dream, and the soul that is subject to this law is not a phantom; but falsehood and curses are phantoms, harmless except to him who utters them. If we or our city have done injustice — and so I fear — we shall suffer what is due; but not because of curses. All this I know; and that by which I know is a voice that speaks within the soul. It rings out in the hour of trouble like the rescue-cry in battle, ever loudest when I am most beset; I can no more doubt what it tells me than doubt my being. Where it bids me walk I walk, though it be among shadows, and with it I fear not even the shadow men call death. The rest, good friends, may perhaps be darkness, — but it is surely peace.”



## XVI.

### *The Sailing of the Fleet*

THRASYBULUS, bending over the sand, was drawing a figure of some sort, with quite a company gathered round him. When I had pressed through to his side, I saw that he was tracing a map in rough outline on the dust.

“There,” he said, straightening up and pointing with his stick, “that is Sicily; and Syracuse is right here, fronting us. Those Egesta people, that are asking us to help them, live across on the other side; but that doesn’t count for much, though it seems they’ve got money. Italy comes down here, close to Syracuse; and Carthage is just over yonder in Africa. See, it isn’t far. We’ll get the whole of it if we have any sort of luck. And then — look out, Spartans!”

“There’ll be no such luck for us with Alcibiades in command,” said Critias, coldly. “Have you no better business, Thrasybulus, than helping rascals cheat this crazy people with lying pictures?” He stamped out the map. Several lifted their hands to strike, but he sneered in their faces and walked away.



For these were the days when our city was all in a flutter over the great Sicilian project. The gathering troops paraded in the streets; the markets hummed with talk. Piræus rang with the clamour of hammer and adze; the harbour was dense with shipping and alive with dancing boats. Great bags of silver were carried about openly, and the money-changers' tables were piled high.

"Do you embark?" I asked Thrasybulus, in an undertone.

"My mother weeps and cries out at any speech of it," he answered, regretfully. "She imagines that Sicily is somewhere away beyond the Pillars; she can't understand a map. Of course, while she feels so, I can't leave her here alone, — though my uncle is willing to manage the property. But isn't it slave's luck?"

"It is my father that will hinder me," I said. "Still, I shall ask him."

But I found my father less positive than I had expected. His look was troubled and full of doubt; he did not answer at once. "I will not say that I approve the plan," he said, finally. "It is a boys' war; I have no confidence in Alcibiades, as you know. Yet it may prove a great opportunity, after all; and with so good a man as Nicias joined in command —"

"Lamachus, too," I interrupted. "Lamachus is the best soldier I ever knew — except you, father."

"Yes," he said, "Lamachus is a stout, practical fighter, and a campaigner of great experience, —



though somewhat headlong, in his youth at least. I have often wondered that so able an officer should remain so poor."

I laughed. "They say he has just sent a bill to the city auditors for the price of a pair of shoes and a woollen cloak — and he had it marked 'urgent!' "

My father frowned. "It is disgraceful: such a fellow is unfit for office. Yet even your ragged Lamachus is better than your reckless debauchee, whose dragging purple is a shame to manhood and a menace to the state. I grieve, my son, that you so often compromise yourself in such company."

"You don't know him, father. He can do what no other in Athens can do."

"He can, indeed! But with the good Nicias in charge to prevent hasty action there can be no serious disaster."

"It is the finest armament we have ever mustered. A hundred of our own best triremes, with picked crews, and more from the allies — it cannot fail."

"Not without gross mismanagement; and the very unwillingness of Nicias, and his refusal to sail with fewer ships, show a prudence which ensures victory from the outset. I have little liking for these far-off ventures, — but you must make your own decision."

And then, to my surprise, I found that I was myself undecided. So it was with many others: we were shouting down all doubts, from doubting hearts. At length, vexed with my own fruitless debating, I staked the issue on the cast of an obol,



—the owl for Athens, the head of Athena for enlistment. Yet when the helmeted head fell uppermost I could not accept the result. I repeated the cast with a drachma: again Athena smiled from her helmet, and still I wavered.

In this mood I met Socrates, — for a wonder standing quite alone on the edge of the market, his eyes fixed on the ground. I wasted no words in needless explanations, but let fly my question.

“Tell me, Socrates, — how will it be?” I asked him twice before he heeded me. “How will it be? I don’t know what to do.”

Then he looked up. “Well,” he said, “before doing it is quite needful to know what to do. Wait, then, until you know.”

“But how will it be?”

His eyes had dropped again; he stood like one listening. “Few will return. It is not your destiny, I think, to die elsewhere than at Athens.”

Alcibiades had joined us. “See,” he said, “if this croaker speaks true, you have only to keep away from Athens and you are nothing less than immortal. Come with me: I will make you a ruler of cities. Come: the love of Alcibiades is no light matter. Come, garland,” he ended, with sudden reminiscence.

But I turned to Socrates. “Did the voice tell you that?”

“The voice spoke.”

“And did the voice also bid me wait?”

“That was only the voice of reason.”

“But you yourself would counsel me to wait?”



"Then wait on me," broke in Alcibiades, "and fortune shall wait on both of us. Frog," he cried, turning sharply on Socrates, "have you any evil to croak of me?"

The answer was not to be forgotten. It came, not as Socrates was wont to speak, but in a slumberous monotone, more like the droning of a bombyx:

"Thou shalt return in triumph, but not from Sicily. There shall be disaster, but defeat shall never look thee in the face. Thou art not to be trusted; yet, woe to those who trust thee not. Thy life shall be spent in doing and undoing; and this is not my word, but the voice."

He ceased speaking, but stood as rigid as a shape of stone, his look lost in space. I had never seen the like before.

"The fit is on him now," said Alcibiades. "You could scarcely rouse him with a trumpet. He is often so. Once in Thrace he stood thus from nightfall to daybreak, never moving, — then went to his tent with the morning in his face and Apollo only knows what new wisdom in his heart."

"He has spoken an oracle."

"An oracle indeed: when he speaks thus it is Apollo's truth. Jove! the meaning is somewhat beyond me, but I accept it. And truly, it sounds more auspicious than most of those we hear. I shall return triumphant, but not from Sicily — from Carthage, more likely. My face shall bring victory — what care I for the luck of others? My enemies shall have their fill of woe — these are words of good



import; and by the Infernals, I have enemies enough to fill the air with howling. I shall make and unmake as I will — perhaps even to the unmaking of Father Demus, Theramenes. Those of my blood once ruled the city better than he. Come with me, Theramenes; you shall be second only to Alcibiades. Even by the warning of Socrates — against whom none shall breathe a whisper when I rule — you are safe with me, while Athens holds your death.”

“Where better could I die? Besides, I know he did not mean to-morrow, nor the day after. Alcibiades, you have been speaking treason in my ears. There will be no echo of those words, for I love you better than a brother; but I will not cast my lot with one who dreams of tyranny.”

“How long have you been so devoted to old Father Demus, always a dullard, now deep in his dotage?”

“I think of the many as you do. The few, who alone make any show of sanity, should rule — if they will rule with honesty and moderation. So Socrates thinks, and so think all men of sense. But for one alone to lord it over all is monstrous. I will not see my countrymen made slaves; nor will I myself be a slave, even to Alcibiades.”

“For your sake,” he cried, gaily, “I here and now renounce all thought of tyranny. I will rule by the breath of the mob, as heretofore. We will be tyrants only in foreign cities. You have no longer any excuse.”

It was hard — it was very hard — to resist his



entreaties; but I knit my heart and faced him. "Hear me, Alcibiades. Once before, long ago, you held out your hands to me like that, and bade me choose between you and Socrates. As I chose then I choose now. It is decided: I will not go."

This was my final word; yet as I walked away he kept beside me, still urging. As we turned the corner I looked back. Socrates had not stirred: except the light quiver of his tunic in the wind, he stood as motionless as the mantic figure of Cassandra that rose on the painted wall just behind, — and so we left him. But Alcibiades begged in vain.

A few days later I chanced upon Andocides near the Rotunda. With him were Phrynichus, Critias, Taureas, and several others of the rabid sort, pressing about Charmides. They halted in their talk as I approached, and stared at me curiously. I turned aside: I did not even salute them; but Andocides, shaking off the hand which Critias laid on his shoulder, made after me. I disliked him, and he knew it; but now he made up to me.

"I hear that you have broken with Alcibiades," he began.

"I shall not sail, if that is what you mean."

"But he is angry. They say that he threatens you."

I stood silent and sullen.

"I think you are wise," he pursued. "You need not fear him. There are others who will not sail — with Alcibiades."



"I doubt he will miss you," I exclaimed, impatiently.

"Perhaps not. We shall see. Perhaps Alcibiades himself will not sail."

"You cannot stop him. What do you mean?"

He peered at me keenly, and seemed to hesitate. He was thin and sallow, with long, lank hair and wavering eyes; I observed that he carried a staff, in the Spartan fashion. "Come," he said, apparently changing the subject, "if you stay in Athens you will need amusement. Have you ever heard of our Laconian club?"

"Possibly: but how do you amuse yourselves?"

"Oh, for one thing we study the institutions of Sparta." He laughed. "We rather admire them; they are more to our liking than those of Athens. We even call our officers Ephors. But — Holy Hermes! that is one of our secrets, and you are not yet initiated!"

"Safe enough, with me."

"I was sure of it: you will join us; you are not of the rabble. It was only because of Alcibiades that we distrusted you. He has cast you off: you now belong with us." I was gulping with rage and disgust, but he did not perceive it. "You shall soon see changes. Father Demus we scorn. Alcibiades we hate and thwart. Then, too, we have our religious amusements, and to-night —"

But here anger broke loose from judgment, — perhaps on the verge of revelation. "You amuse yourselves with treason," I cried, "and sacrilege,



doubtless, is your pet diversion. You mimic the Spartans, and are the more like apes. You are jealous of Alcibiades, yet can only imitate his worst faults, — such manikins are you. I will at least consort with men; and if ever I see fit to turn traitor it will sooner be with him than with you.”

The eyes of Andocides flashed green, like a cat's. “As you please,” he said, “but have a care of your tongue. We carry knives as well as canes, and use them to teach the Pythagorean silence.”

“I do not doubt it. Among your Spartan studies the crypteian murder gangs would not be neglected.”

His lips were drawn; he had come so close that the reek of his wine was in my nostrils. As I pushed him back I heard the low moan of the cord as Golas set his bow.

“We have learned all that is needful,” snapped the Laconiser. “Fool, I would not strike you here. Yet I tell you frankly, there are knives that do our bidding.” Then he smoothed his face, and his manner changed. “Come, I will not leave you in such a mood. Our interests are one: we shall need you, and you will need us. I have spoken too soon. You are full of childish scruples and not yet ready; Critias was right. Still, there is merry riot in your veins. Like myself, you fear nothing and have some tang of wit about you. Well, you are missing sport, but you will come to us later; you cannot do otherwise.”

“Indeed! Then hear my answer. When I cannot



do otherwise I will join you — not one day sooner. Shall I swear it — by all the gods you mock? ”

“ Shining Apollo and All-seeing Eye of Jove! You still believe in the gods? and doubtless in a certain rattle of syllables called ‘ justice,’ often in the mouth of that old rogue Socrates, but less than the breath that utters it? Dear child, are you not also afraid of Mormo? Now don’t be angry; you will soon grow older. You were not present, I fancy, when your worshipful Alcibiades, in his drink, showed up the sacred mysteries for a jest! Such a happy, fruitful jest! and so like him! But in politics you will find it as I have said. With your darling Alcibiades you have quarrelled. With the swinish populace you have neither sympathy nor credit. They grunt ‘ aristocrat ’ after you even now — both at you and your father. Stand, then, by those of your own sort, and don’t flinch at a little necessary crime. We are only setting our knives against the tusks of swine before they gore us. You are our novitiate; you have gone too far to recede. Think of this, my virtuous friend. Watch the signs, and take your time, — but meanwhile walk by the rule of Pythagoras, or you will learn more of that crypteian service than you wish to know.” He glanced toward Golas. “ Let your fellow there slack his bow. Hercules! but he is swift. By the Twin Archers in Heaven, if the tales they tell of him are true he will be of use to us some day.”

“ He is worth your whole crypteian regiment. Should you have occasion to murder his master you



will need a new band. Listen, Andocides. When the ships of Athens are vanquished on the sea; when Alcibiades is praised in Sparta; and when — well — when Father Demus himself begins to listen to your proposals to put him out of business, — then I will cast my lot with you, and Golas shall serve you. Till then, no more words.”

“You are rather exacting,” he answered, coolly, “but stranger things have happened.”

Boldly as I had answered — and the loudness of my tone had sent his eyes uneasily roving — I went home heavy-hearted.



## XVII.

### *Broken Stones*

THE next morning all Athens was in an uproar. Roused by the clamour in the street, I sprang from my bed and ran out just as the sky was lighting. I could scarcely push open the door; an angry, jabbering crowd filled the roadway from wall to wall. I pressed through to learn the cause.

Nearly opposite our main entrance had stood an ancient Hermes-post. It was like a hundred others in different parts of the city, — a low, square column, carved at the top to represent a head. It was not artistic: the coarse features grinned inanely from a weather-worn frill of spiral curls; the face that was meant for a god's was more like a satyr's. But there the rude stone had stood unharmed from the earliest days, staring with hollow eyes upon the passing throngs of many generations, the cherished guardian of the street. Even the Persians had spared it; for all that any one knew it might be older than Theseus. The sacred olives, whose very stumps are fenced about with walls and penalties, were not more inviolable; the fairest statues in the temples were scarcely so hallowed.



The space about this figure appeared to be the centre of excitement, and toward it I forced my way; but I found there only a spire of battered marble, rising amid a white shatter of chips and fragments. Every trace of carving had been pounded off with heavy hammers.

I turned on the crowd and out-shouted its tumult. "Who among you has dared this sacrilege?"

"None here!" The answer echoed in from all quarters, mingled with oaths and protestations. "It was done in the night! A plot — some sedition — a scheme of the godless oligarchs! We are lost — our gods will abandon us. Every Hermes in Athens is broken!"

"All broken?" I paled with a sudden suspicion.

"No," said a man near me. "As I passed the house of Andocides I saw one untouched, — that new one, set up by the Ægeians."

"The house of Andocides?" I fancied I knew the reason. But I stood bewildered, making an ill show of myself.

Then came a voice from a distance. "Is not this Theramenes, the son of Hagnon, who lives opposite? Perhaps he himself could answer — on the wheel! or that old aristocrat, his father!" But others cried, — "Hush! Be still, Thraso! These are no traitors. They fight too well for Athens."

"It is most like Alcibiades," a new voice suggested. "No! No!" exclaimed many, — "not Alcibiades!"



“Why should he?” I cried. “He last of all men, for he has most at stake.”

“I suspect that Andocides,” shouted another. And while they bawled and brawled, even to blows, I made my way back to the house.

My father was still in bed. He had slept late, dreaming away the wine, which he used of late more freely than formerly. But he sat up aghast when I told him.

“The gods will be terribly angered! Unless these wretches are quickly punished, Athens herself will pay the penalty. And the people—they will run mad. Why did you seek to defend Alcibiades? It was rash; and I think him guilty.”

“Father,” I pleaded, “does he not truly wish to sail?”

“Of course: he wishes to win more races at Olympia, and must buy new horses. His chest is empty; therefore the ships must sail.”

“Would he, then, call down the curses of gods and men at such a moment, to blast his own best hopes?”

“He regards neither gods nor men.” My father lifted his hand to his brow. “But you are right. He scruples at nothing, but this he did not do—neither he nor those who serve him.”

“But his enemies? and those who wish to stay the ships?”

“Those most like him, who hate him, would do anything. Call me the servants. I will go out.”

The fleet was now on the eve of sailing; the



trireme of Lamachus hung on the edge of the outer harbour, and part of the troops were already embarked. Yet even so Alcibiades could not escape public impeachment. Those whom I most suspected lay as silent as adders in the dust, but all the demagogues and loud-mouthed orators broke out upon him. That he had any share in the wrecking of the statues there was not the slightest evidence, but they denounced him in open assembly with frantic charges — a scorner of the gods, a betrayer of the people — fiercely accusing him of that old violation of the mysteries of which there were then so many rumours.

“ Shall such a man, perjured in the holiest oaths, doomed by the curse of the Mother of the Queen of Death, lead your armies to certain destruction? ” So railed one of them; and the priests of the temple foamed at the lips and writhed on their seats.

Then the officers cleared the assembly of all who were not admitted to the mysteries, and Pythonicus brought in a slave, who, he said, had seen Alcibiades and his drunken crew mimic the sacred scenes of the initiation as the sport of a revel, — in proof of which the fellow repeated many secrets and holy words that no slave should know. This I did not hear myself, for I was among those thrust out; but when we flocked back, just as I reached my place, Alcibiades leaped upon the platform.

“ It is false, ” he shouted; and his voice rang nobly, for he was shaken out of all his affectations. “ Both the charge and the evidence are false, —



the desperate invention of enemies seeking to wreck my hopes and yours. They, not I, are the traitors; they, too, are the blasphemers. What have you heard? A slave, repeating forbidden words! Who taught him those words? I, Alcibiades? Never! Even those who call me traitor do not call me fool: have you put your trust in a fool? No: the slave learned his lesson from those who needed his evidence — slave's evidence, impiously forged against Alcibiades and Athens. Theirs is the sacrilege; they have betrayed the mysteries. And who else, so likely as they and others of their kind, have defiled our streets and incensed our gods?"

Here he paused; and the hush that fell on the assembly was like the stillness of a chamber. Then came a rumble of applause, which grew to such a roar of feet and voices that the whole hill seemed to tremble. For the people still loved Alcibiades: who could hear his words, who could look upon his face, and doubt him? And now, within no longer space than an arrow might live in flight, the aspect of the case had changed. His enemies slunk and cowered like hounds when the sky is full of thunder.

He, himself, stood smiling on the bema, more beautiful than any marble god. He flung open his mantle and bared his shining breast. "Judge between them and me," he cried, "and since the time is pressing, make no delay. If you believe me innocent, let me sail against Sicily with a name un-



stained; if you find me guilty, let me die to-morrow. Come: put me on trial at once; it is yours to give the verdict. Shall I go with the fleet to win victories for a city that trusts its chosen leader? or, shall I stay, to drink hemlock on the word of a slave, while another sails my trireme?" And at this there arose a great cry, for the soldiers would follow no other.

But Pythonicus, rallying somewhat, demanded that the slave be examined under torture, — which, indeed, was no more than his right. So the fellow was given over to the tormentors; and though he shrieked in his pain, for they showed him no mercy, he held fast to his story. Whereupon there was great confusion; for all knew that a slave speaks from the rack like the Pythia from the Delphic tripod, and even Alcibiades blanched. Again he pleaded for instant trial; but the priests rose up in a body to demand that there be no hasty action in a case such as this, while all the soldiers and most of the citizens murmured against delay. In the upshot nothing was settled except that Alcibiades must sail with the fleet: black or white, he could get no other verdict then.

Three days later the triremes sailed, — and who was not there to see? All the people, and all above them or below them — all who hoped or feared, or loved or hated. Mothers, whose sons were on the decks, proud yet tearful, with veils flung back and straining eyes; fathers, leaning on canes, grieving that age had so crippled them; merchants, grumbling



at the cost, yet with rich trading ventures in the convoy; traitors, with a smiling sneer and ambiguous phrases; labourers, hoarse with shouting; officials, full of pomp and bustle; image-breakers and priests, alike with pious faces. Citizens, aliens, even slaves, — all were there; not a handbreadth of space was left vacant.

Thrasybulus and I had locked arms; we were almost thrust over the edge of the wharf. "I shall always hate my mother for this," he said between laughing and crying, as he looked at the ships.

The whole fleet was now heaving on the swell, the oars lifted and ready to strike, the decks aflash with armed men in full metal. Then the captains advanced, each with his golden cup, and at a signal all poured such libations of rich, red wine that for a moment the green waves beneath them ran gory, while all the people raised their voices in a mighty prayer; yet from the very multitude, and the lack of unison, the pæan moaned in our ears and died away with a wailing ululation. But its echo was suddenly pierced by the shrilling of the pipes from every galley; the poised oars swung against the water, and the keen beaks darted forward like a line of spears. The fleet started as if for a race; and the triremes did race all the way to Ægina, — Lamachus leading, which must have vexed Alcibiades, while even Nicias could not keep his crew from competing. Yet when the war-ships were dim in the distance, the transports and mer-



chantmen were still streaming out of the harbour, stretching after them over the sea in a cloudy band that dwindled and glimmered to the very offing.

“Look at them!” exclaimed Thrasybulus. “Athens will be the richest city in Hellas when all those come freighting back, full of slaves and the spoil of cities.”

“It is win or lose everything, now,” I said. “We shall win all cities or lose our own.”

“Don’t croak, Theramenes.” He turned upon me almost savagely. “Before the gods, don’t croak just as the fleet is sailing. As for losing our city, look at those walls; you and I alone could save the city. And as for this Sicilian business, Nicias will hold down Alcibiades, and Alcibiades will spur up Nicias, and Lamachus will give a good push now and then, and talk common sense to both of them. That three could take Babylon; they will scoop up Syracuse like a rabbit in a net. Those islanders can’t fight; they’re mostly traders and don’t know how. But if they try it, Lamachus will drive them in, and Nicias will wall them up, and Alcibiades will persuade them to throw open their gates.”

“I believe he could do it — he if any one.”

“Then the rest will come to us on the run. I’ve learned all about those Sicilians. They can’t make a union; they hate each other like Thebans and Plataeans.”

We were now between the Long Walls, and



Conon had joined us; he was not exactly of our set, but we both liked him.

"See here, Conon," said Thrasybulus, still vexed. "Theramenes has black bile to-day. He is afraid these walls are going to be battered down like the Hermæ."

Conon glanced up at them and laughed. "If ever they are, I'll undertake to build them again myself. Does he fancy that the Hermes gang have not yet had a surfeit of smashing?"

"He has had a surfeit himself — of Bœotian eels, I should think. He listens for voices and watches the crows."

"By the way, have you heard the last? They have found new evidence. A fellow named Teucrus, a metic, who ran away the morning after the sacrilege, has come back to claim the reward. He tells a great story; it hits Alcibiades and two or three senators. The whole investigation is started again."

"Ten thousand drachmas will always buy a story," I answered, crossly.

"Yes," said Thrasybulus, "from those metics, especially. What do they care for Athens? I despise an informer."

"The money has bought a fine panic, anyhow," said Conon. "Your lucky Alcibiades got off just in time. Some of the others have run for it; they didn't even wait to see the ship-muster. What's that?"

We stopped, startled. Shrill shrieks were is-



suings from within the city; then the melancholy cadences of a dirge, mingled with women's cries.

"The gods avert it, that we meet a funeral," said Thrasybulus in a fallen voice. "I don't study entrails and puzzle over oracles, like Nicias; but an omen like that would scare old Lamachus. If it's a funeral all Athens will meet it, coming up from the harbour."

"The funeral of Syracuse, perhaps," suggested Conon.

"If it were, the mourning wouldn't be in Athens. That's a good turn, though, worth remembering to use with soldiers."

It was so good, in fact, that it eased our minds considerably. We went on — for there was no other way — and presently met a fantastic procession of women, wailing, waving their arms and plucking at their hair. In the midst was borne a bier, and on it — no corpse of flesh and blood, but a corpse-like waxen effigy, which somehow seemed more gruesome than the thing it suggested. We stood close against a house-front to let it pass; and so many who were behind us did the same that the bier moved through an avenue of men.

"It is the Adonia," whispered Thrasybulus, — "the unluckiest day in all the year. What possessed them to sail to-day? The women are mourning the death of Adonis in his prime."

We started on, driven forward by the press, but



the cries still jarred our ears. Conon spoke as if thinking aloud.

"It is worse than any ordinary funeral — much worse. That might be mere accident; this looks like fate."

"I am almost glad I did not sail," said Thrasybulus.

"I wish I had chanced it," said I, "with Alcibiades. It may be that I could have helped him."

"He admits — so they say — that you saved him from mistakes in Achæa."

"Conon, did he say that?" and I felt a pang. Then — for I, too, had been pondering on the omen — "was not that Adonis afterward restored to life?" I asked.

"Yes," they answered, both in a breath — Thrasybulus and Conon.

"It is fated, I think, that Athens shall celebrate the Adonia, — and the corpse will not be waxen."

"But the city will not perish!"

"Athens can never perish utterly," I cried. "The gods love her, as they loved Adonis. She would even rise from her scattered stones."



## XVIII.

### *Prison and Court*

**B**UT what had befallen Gorgo — radiant Gorgo? How fared it, through all these years, with the wonderful rose-glowing maid who had kissed my lips in Sparta? What word had come from my plighted love — my sudden, oath-bound bride — who had sworn to call me, and to wait?

No tidings had ever come, — and none were expected. The drumming rap of a messenger upon our panels no longer shook my heart and tripped its steady oar-strokes; on the casket in which my pearly token lay, a dust-bloom had gathered. Eight years had passed without a whisper: it is hard to believe it now, — but Gorgo was almost forgotten. Her face still shone in my dreams — I have never lost her from my dreams; but it rose no more by day to blur the faces of others, and when the rare thought came I thought of her only so — as a dream. And who would keep faith with a dream?

Indeed, it was at the house of Myrinna that I first learned of my danger.

“Go away, you great, clumsy hoplite,” she had



said to Thrasybulus, who was with me. "*You* are in no danger; but go and polish up your shield. I have something important to say to this haughty young aristocrat."

"Indeed, he will be safer elsewhere," I remarked. For Thrasybulus was always too much in earnest in his trifling.

"I don't care for his danger," she pouted. "He wearies me; and he's such a rank democrat. I'm an aristocrat myself, even if I am a foreigner. It's my nature."

"You want Theramenes all to yourself," he said, jealously; but which of the two he was really most jealous of I cannot say.

"Of course I do: go away now, and get me the news," she commanded him. And he went.

She was reclining on a couch, while I sat stiffly on a chair; for I did not more than half like her. A tabouret of wine and fruit was at her elbow. She was luxuriously arrayed from her embroidered slipper to her heavily perfumed hair. It was an open secret that she admired me; but to me the whole situation was rather sickish, and I shoved my feet uneasily on the floor.

"You are so cross," she said, with a pretty little assumption of childish simplicity. "First drink my health—both from one cup: see, it is here that my lips have touched the rim."

"Oh, tell it out, whatever it is," I cried roughly.

She set down the goblet with a ringing jar. "You are a great brute, Theramenion. Any one



else would have taken it upon his knees. But you" — she grew serious instantly — "you are right. It is no time to toss kisses and throw cot-tabos when the hemlock cup is brewing. Come — you shall thank me, at least."

"The hemlock!"

"Yes, you cold marble Eros, the hemlock. But don't be afraid; it can't chill a heart like yours. But, truly, it is in sight. You are suspected; your name has been mentioned."

I sprang from my chair. "About the Hermæ?"

"I don't know. Yes — the Hermæ, the mysteries, anything sacrilegious; it is like all the rest. You have been intimate with Alcibiades; isn't that enough — for some of them? I don't blame you; I admire him. I think that you and he look alike, only he's rather taller — and not made of stone."

I stamped my foot. "Is that all? What else?"

"That's the reason, but of course it isn't all they say. You needn't get angry; you won't see me again very soon — if you ever do. You'll have to leave Athens, my Theramenion; if you don't choose some other gate you'll go out by the Dipylon, — and you know where that leads to."

"But what is it they say? Tell me quickly all you know of this." And to hasten the matter I stooped to kiss her, but almost checked in the mawkish reek of perfumes that hung about her hair. She caught my head in her hands, held it fast for a moment, then pushed it away.

"Oh, that isn't worth half an obol!" she cried —



“a chipped copper would pay for it! Don't you value your life more than that? You've never kissed any one: you don't know how. I wonder if you could learn.”

“Would you have the Eleven find me here, taking lessons?”

“Do you think they would really look for you here?” she said, with such a smile of satisfaction that I ground my teeth. “But no: they would freeze you forever with their cursed hemlock; and I'm sure I don't want to see you any colder.”

“Shall I seek an answer elsewhere?”

“No, no! you must either flee or hide. I wish” — but she looked in my face and did not finish the suggestion. “Well, the special charge is that you harboured that wretched little Melian atheist, Diogoras, for whom a reward is offered.”

“I never so much as heard his name. I don't know him from Pythagoras.”

“You couldn't help knowing, if you did it. He's a horrible misshapen little creature, as ugly as Cerberus. They say that you even took him to a banquet, where he said all sorts of horrid things and scared everybody.” I started and flushed. “There now! that colour is quite becoming to you. But you did it: any one can see that. And it's like you, just as it would be like Alcibiades. For my own part I don't care — not one of your silly kisses — for those peevish, helpless gods that they have to be so careful of; but I wouldn't dare say it, except to you. Oh, yes! I pray and make gifts and pour



libations with the rest. Theramenion, where are you going? Don't go yet. Why do you go?"

"To demand a fair trial," I answered, shortly.

"You mustn't. You can't get it. The people are frantic. Alcibiades himself wouldn't dare face them now. They say the Thebans are mustering on the border. Everybody thinks there's treason somewhere. Men like you run out of the market as soon as they see the senators gathering — and you are such an aristocrat. Oh! I shall never see you again!" And she broke out wailing and sobbing. I remember noting, even at such a moment, that her cheeks were not painted after all; but I left her without more words.

I had not gone far when I met Nicanor, of the Eleven. I observed that he looked carefully away from me, but I went straight up to him.

"Do you want me?" I asked.

He seemed reluctant to speak. "Indeed, there is a warrant out," he said, "but I didn't see you. Why did you press before me?"

"I want my trial, if I am accused."

"It isn't what I'd want, just now. I'd have found occasion to visit family friends in Thebes for awhile. But since you've presented yourself I suppose I must take you." And he led me away to prison.

They shut me in a great barren chamber of stone, already full to overflowing, and for the most part with men that I knew. Not one of us had been convicted of any crime, much less proved guilty. We had all been arrested on the bare word of informers,



some on the merest suspicion. Not that all were innocent — far from it; but innocent or guilty, as things were going, we stood about equal chances for the hemlock.

And here, for more than a month, we lay huddled in a gathering ferment of anger and despair. Often the women came, for they alone had free access — mothers and sisters and wives — wetting the dingy pavement with tears we were too proud to shed; but most of us wept with them before the thing was ended.

Each night we were fettered, since the place was not otherwise sufficiently secure; and each morning, when our shackles were loosed, our limbs were so numb from the stark clamping that we could scarcely stand. For by day we were allowed to move about as we liked; and our chief occupation was to hunt out new prisoners and learn the latest developments. This was almost our only means of information, as few of the women could tell us anything intelligible; they could only make everything worse by their heart-breaking lamentations, bewailing us as if we were already dead. And in such a search, one evening, just before the fettering, I found him I least desired to see, — my father, sitting against the wall, his knees drawn up under his chin and his white beard flowing over them. He had been too zealous, it seems, for his son; and that, in an obvious aristocrat, savoured of treason. So a vile informer, disappointed in a brazen demand for hush-money, had marked him as a notable victim;



our city swarmed with these fellows. They had even dared to talk of torture; but that, because many murmured, was spared.

Then it was that the hate implanted by my grandfather rushed up from the depths of my soul, and I cursed the people. Had I not just cause? The more wonder is that I ever again could find it in my heart to trust them. Yet they were not wholly without excuse; there were traitors enough among us. But we all grew ripe for treason, and full of the rage and bitterness of murder, as we lay in that prison. Is it so strange that we began to dream of revolution—that we watched and prayed and plotted for our day of vengeance?

The suspense had grown quite intolerable. At last, after I had held a long debate with Charmides, he and I went together to Andocides, his cousin.

“Andocides,” I said, “you, if any one, know the facts about this deadly business of the Hermæ.”

“I was helpless in bed by a fall from my horse,” he protested, violently. “I have slaves who will prove it under torment.” His eyes wavered more than ever; his face was gaunt and wild, with sudden writhings, like that of a madman. But we were used to these things.

“I know that you know, and you know how I know,” I insisted, coolly. “We have not, however, selected you, Andocides, as a man who could easily be persuaded to sacrifice himself for the common good. No: this is our plan. Turn informer: you can do that, and we all ask it of you. By this course



you will save your beloved self, to begin with; it is not a very sweet path, but you can tread it, and we are none of us dainty now. Then testify what you like — lies or truth, it doesn't much matter, only testify, and satisfy the people. Denounce yourself, of course — you'll be quite immune — and ten or twelve others, as many as may be necessary. Make your own selection: guilty or innocent, sacrifice whom you will; only get the rest of us out of this. Better that a few drink the hemlock and done with it, than that all of us rave and rot here."

This and much more I said to him, urging the matter with strenuous insistence, while Charmides supported me with his utmost influence; and in the end we prevailed. I had selected Andocides because I believed him the only man of all in that den who would consent to play the part; and I was right. Even he was very reluctant; but he did it. How much truth he told only he and his victims knew; but those whom he indicated presently went out feet foremost, and the rest walked free, — my father among them. I myself was detained somewhat longer because the charge against me was a separate issue, but the public excitement was now so much allayed that I was confident I could vindicate myself.

The delay was hard to bear. I was growing thin and weak, my hair was ragged, my cheeks were bleached with prison pallor; but at length the day of my trial came and I was led before the dicastery. The free air lifted my spirit like wine, yet I walked



with half-closed eyes, and my feet so faltered that I leaned on the arm of Nicanor.

“Put a bold front on it, young man,” he whispered, in my ear, “but speak good words and don’t be ashamed to beg a little. You are coming out of this business better than I feared.”

As we entered the court I observed that the lintel was blue, which I thought a good sign. The place seemed strangely light. The jury were already arriving, giving up their painted staves and receiving their leaden checks. Soon the whole five hundred were sworn and on the benches. Behind them a great crowd pressed against the rail. Nicanor kept close by me, but my father quickly had me in his arms and many friends gathered round us. Then the Royal Archon, who presided in cases such as this, opened the roll which lay on the table before him and signalled to the herald.

It was the first time that I had ever stood within the bar of a law court; but there is no such novelty about a trial in Athens that I need tell all that was said and done that day. Pisander, I found, was my chief accuser; and I was rather glad of this, for although he was a clever speechmaker I thought that so notorious a liar and coward might easily be discredited. But I was mistaken: who, indeed, ever could predict the humour or the judgment of a democratic jury?

Pisander, of course, spoke first. He proved readily enough the facts of the banquet — which I did not deny; for the rest, he dealt mainly in proba-



bilities. He dwelt heavily on my associates, — especially Alcibiades. It grieved him, no doubt, that he could not show that this “mystery-profaning profligate” was one of the company on that night, but he made the best of it. “I have learned,” he declared, “that it was no other than Alcibiades who introduced that god-detested wretch, Diagoras, to the culprit.” The idea that I did not know who the man was he utterly scouted. “As well might the impious mutilators of your gods, with whom this excellent youth was so familiar, deny that they knew their deed was a heaven-defying sacrilege!” For he must needs bring in the Hermæ! He even made the fact of my imprisonment a presumption against me. Then he sneered at my politics — though his own were not above suspicion — and pointed scornfully toward my father and our friends.

“Of such origin and with such intimates,” he said, in conclusion, “a rioter by night, a haunter of the chambers of sophists by day, an enemy of the people always — is it anything strange that he also consorts with an atheist whom the gods have cursed with the visible marks of their anger and the city has justly banned? Together they mounted the stairway of your sacred Acropolis — the hideous foreign dwarf upon whom the gods have visited their execration, and this son of aristocrats. Together they stood in the holy temple of Athena, beneath the very eyes of your protecting deity; and together they jeered and denied her godhead! Behold him now, — his hollow eye, his shaking limbs,



his pallid, guilt-confessing face? Has not the wrath of Heaven already begun its work upon him? Take heed, citizens of Athens, lest the vengeance of gods already hotly incensed fall upon you too, and upon this city — if you too shield an atheist and acquit this scoffer.”

He demanded death as the penalty; and it was easy to see that he had made a deep impression. In that mad time an accuser's task was light, for any charge of sacrilege, however baseless, seemed instantly to horrify the hearer into belief.

My defence, I suppose, was weak. I protested that I knew neither the man's name nor his character. I denied that I had participated in any impiety. I showed that the stranger, who called himself Aapteryx, had left the banquet alone, and that I had never been seen with him since. For proof I called back some of my accuser's own witnesses, — he who served me best being Socrates.

“Aapteryx! a likely name!” blustered Pisander. “How dare you testify before this court that you saw no evidence of their complicity?” he demanded, in a rage. “Beware, old sceptic, lest you too be brought before the Royal Archon.”

“And are you,” said Socrates, “who thus accuse others of impiety,” looking him steadily in the eye, “yourself so wanting in reverence for the gods that you seek by threats to perjure a witness who has sworn to the gods? Take care, my friend, lest, while professing this zeal for religion, you be guilty



of the greater blasphemy." And at that Pisander dropped him hastily, for the topic was perilous.

But if I had gained any advantage I soon cast it away. The constant slurring reference to Alcibiades had provoked me, and I made, as I thought, a clever turn. "He taunts me," I cried, "with the friendship of the foremost citizen of Athens! Well, I avow it. Is it a crime to be the friend of him whom the whole people trust? Is he whom you have honoured beyond all others an outcast whom none may touch without pollution? Will you listen while dastards revile your chosen leader as if he were a branded criminal?"

But as I spoke their faces grew black, and a great hubbub arose; some even pressed forward as if to pluck me from the platform. But my father was before them all, springing to my side, explaining with swift words in my astonished ear how Alcibiades had been recalled for trial, had fled to the enemy, had been condemned in absence, and was now a traitorous exile, his country's worst foe. I was quite overcome; I could not recover myself. My tongue was silenced; my thoughts were all in disarray, like a broken phalanx.

Then my father stood forth, and as soon as he could get a hearing pleaded in my stead, excusing my ignorance, urging his services and mine in the war, beseeching them with tears; but they listened coldly. Others followed in much the same strain, praying the dicasts not to be too harsh with what they called my youthful follies. But when the jury



had voted and the ballots were poured from the urn and counted, more than three hundred were for conviction. The cup of hemlock seemed almost at my lips.

But the imminence of the peril had brought me to myself again. It was now my privilege to propose an alternative penalty, — which the jury might accept if so inclined. My father wished to speak for me — to propose a fine of ten talents — exile — anything short of death. But I brushed him aside.

“Men of Athens,” I said, “this contest of oratory is now ended. You have given my opponent the verdict. You have decided rightly. He made the better speech.” A hum of surprise arose, but I continued without a pause. “He has made the better speech, but he has lied. You all know that as well as I do.” They almost broke out upon me there, but I raced on. “I am no orator: lying is his regular business.” Some one laughed. “He has made the better speech because he is the better liar. Gentlemen, every one of you knows it.” The laugh became general: the thing had caught their fancy. I took a deep breath and went on.

“Still, you have condemned me: you could not well do otherwise. But now that the question of the penalty is reached, I am sure that you will listen to plain, fair words, and do no injustice.”

The jury were listening with all their ears: the crowd beyond almost broke down the bar in their eagerness to hear. My father’s eyes stood wide



with amazement; Pisander's were snapping mustard. But Pisander had ceased to signify.

"I accept the penalty: let it be death." The assembly groaned; my father paled; Pisander looked stunned. "I accept the penalty: but, fellow citizens, let the enemy inflict it — if they can." A cheer started, but I cut it short. "If I am to die let it be in the service of my city. You need — and there never was greater need — men who can fight for Athens. This glib Pisander can't help you — the poltroon!" There were mingled shouts and laughter. His craven temper was well enough known.

"Or, if you choose, let it be exile, — only let it be where I can still serve my country. My father whispers that Nicias has sent for more men — horse-men especially." I faced the dicastery. "Gentlemen of the jury, I propose as my penalty that I be exiled — to Syracuse; and that I sail with the next detachment."

Then the cheers broke loose; dicasts and spectators alike stood up and tossed their arms and shouted. When the great waxen tablet had been passed through the jury there was scarcely a long line on it. All were short; my proposal had been accepted.

Then suddenly my strength was gone, and the court-room grew darker than my prison. But I felt myself in my father's arms; and we wept together like comrades after a hard-fought battle.



## XIX.

### *A Waxed Riddle*

**T**HRASYBULUS remonstrated with me. "There's no need of your leaving home now unless you choose. There wasn't any penalty, really; they just meant to acquit you. You've made a great hit with them."

But I insisted on keeping my word to the letter. Even my father approved of this.

"Go, my son," he said. "The camp before Syracuse, I think, will be a safer place than Athens in these days."

Almost a year had passed since the sailing of the fleet, and little, it seemed, had been accomplished. The people were fretful and restless; their impatience grew with each dispatch. Thrasybulus voiced it in his own way.

"We should have had all Sicily by this time, if Alcibiades had stayed. If they were going to offer him poison they might at least have waited till he had taken Syracuse. It's a great mistake; I wouldn't go now if I could. I don't mean any disrespect to the Hermæ" — and he lowered his tone — "but I wish they had been smashed in the time



of Solon. And those priests, — they are not half so holy as they think. You'll probably meet the pious Nicias coming back," he concluded, "with an oracle for an excuse."

But the mass of the people still trusted Nicias, — a really honest man was so rare; and though they murmured when he wrote demanding cavalry and more money, six triremes were made ready at once. Two hundred and fifty of us climbed the ladders, carrying our bridles; the horses were to be found for us in Sicily, where they were said to be abundant and of uncommon size and strength. There was also a troop of horse-archers embarked with us, mostly mercenaries and slaves, among whom I enrolled Golas, though I had my doubts about his riding.

And now, with our waving fins of fir outspread, we were swinging and balancing over the heaving purple, which ran so smoothly that no oar missed its stroke. The bird-winds, I remember, were blowing, the light gusts now and then flinging back the spray-spurts tossed from our prow; and just as the last white gleam of Sunium was dying in the offing, a long stream of storks flickered between us and the sun, their black shadows swimming across our planks like a shoal of strange fishes. This was the first of all my voyaging, yet I found the soft roll of the swell most soothing; and never since, even in the stormiest weather, have I lost my love of the lift and fall of the waves, or been in any way troubled by it, unless I lay in chains. So I kept the



open deck and gave my body to its spring as a rider gives to the stride of a galloping horse — eagerly asking of those about me the name of each peaked islet or cloudy promontory or nestling town. For here stretched the empire of Athens, and I wished to know its unmarked watery courses as I knew the passes of Attica.

But still more I observed the ship itself and studied its ways, and especially, when the screens were off, loved to look down into the rowers' gallery, watching the triple ranges of sinewy backs as they swayed and strained to the rhythm of the pipe. It was like a deep trough full of eels, so astir with the bobbing of heads and the wriggle of arms and legs that I could scarcely distinguish those on the lower thwarts. Golas had at first been placed in the second bank, where he plucked his oar through the water with incredible strength, but without willingness or skill, clashing his blade against the others and sometimes striking the face of the man behind him with his close-cropped skull. At last he burst both the fir and the strap with one fell wrench, and still grasping the splintered handle plunged backward through the frightened thalamites to the bottom of the pit, throwing the rest into such disorder that the whole ship jarred and veered.

After that I had him excused from such service; and during the rest of the voyage he mainly sat in the hold shaping long arrows from spar-timber — when he was not too ill — and grinding to proper form and balance the hard steel heads with which



I had furnished him. These tempered heads were the only improvement he ever would accept; and even these he would not use as they came from the hammer of the smith, but rubbed each one upon a stone till it was fashioned exactly to his taste, — on what principle I know not.

We made great progress that first day, reaching Cythera at nightfall; and there we sheltered. The Spartans were stirring again on the coast, they told us. When we put out in the morning the snowy peaks of Taygetus were in plain view, up the valley, and the dawn-glow which I so well remembered was upon them. With that came a sense of the nearness of Gorgo. I had not thought of her thus for years; it was as if she stood upon the hills and beckoned. In Athens she had always seemed remote, like figures seen across a wide expanse of water, which appear no bigger than clay puppets, too small to be alive and real. But now I felt her very presence; the warm sunshine was full of it.

As we rounded the rocky cape — where a school of Arion's dolphins leaped to the sound of our pipes, though the music was none of the sweetest — the sea grew much rougher, and the choppy waves, squelching among the oar-blades, made the rowing very difficult; but it was still broad day when we reached the harbour at Pylos. Here we put in, both for shelter and to deliver instructions to the garrison, sailing close past the island where the Spartans had been taken and beaching on the very sand-spit where Brasidas had lost his shield. Many landed,



but I remained on shipboard; and just at dusk, as I sat on the ledge of the after gangway gazing back at Taygetus, one of the under-officers of the fort came toward me down the slope.

“Do any among you know of a certain fair young Athenian called the son of Hagnon?”

I sprang up. “I am Hagnon’s son, and my age is what you see; but I lay no claim to fairness.”

He laughed. “I follow the phrase as it was given to me,” he said, “with this, which has come through much peril for that same son of Hagnon, fair or otherwise.” He held up a sealed diptych of cypress-wood, wound about with fine linen threads.

“It was brought by a fugitive helot, who would tell us nothing of the sender, but swore by the Carneian god he would bear it to Athens, if need be, for faithful delivery. We preferred that he bear a shield, as we are short-handed; so, to content him, I gave my oath to forward it in some way.”

“The name?”

“Names are cheap, remember. Botas he called himself.”

But the name was not feigned. I knew it as that of the helot who had served me in the house of Rhyzon. My blood surged.

“Can I see him?”

“No: he is absent on a raid. He will be away three days at least; and, as doubtless you understand, many never get back to us. But my duty ends here.” He came beneath the stern and passed up the tablet.



It was sealed with white clay, indented by the pressure of a double row of pearls; Gorgo had laid her wrist upon it for a signet. I set my knife against the threads and parted the panels with trembling hands; but although I could see that letters were traced on the black surface of the wax, the gloom had become too deep for reading. So I was forced to wait, having no light nor any means of procuring one; and before the sun had risen the next morning we were far out upon the sea. Then, lying upon my face in the shadow of the great square sail — for the wind favoured us now — I forgot the wide sparkle around me and the distant, drifting coast, quite lost in the message of Gorgo.

It was written with a skilless hand, in odd, angular Laconian characters and Dorian idiom. The purport at first seemed disappointing, and the wording strange. For after some study thus I read it: —

*This she of Sparta writes — that was called — such a perilous thing to say — like the beautiful Athena — but he said she would not be offended — to him who called her so, whose name she knows not — nor if he lives. For he did not tell his name — but surely he lives. It is Hagnon's son, of Athena's city — and he is like Paris of Troy to look upon. If the one reading is not like that let him not read — for it is not he. But if it is truly he — then between him and this maid were rash words spoken — which it was better, perhaps, to forget. But it is for him to do the forgetting. And if he has forgotten let*



*him not read — for why should he read? Yet if he can, let him forget — for to have promised and always to remember is so terrible. But if he shall do that he swore to do it is more terrible — and if his life is of any use to him as things are now, he must not. But if life is not good to him so, and he will, it is soon the time. And she who is writing writes thus and not in another way because of fear. Perhaps — if you are he — you will think there is something beneath all this — these words are so shallow — and perhaps, if they seem too cold, you can find some way to warm them. But unless you remember — or if you are sorry — do not try to understand — put all on the fire quickly, wax and wood. And what you took from Sparta put also in the fire — for if ever another should have it those words which were spoken would cling and be a curse to that woman.*

I puzzled long over this. Surely the gods had dulled my understanding. That something lay hidden here I saw plainly, but I could not make it out — not then.

Yet not all was a riddle. She had kept her troth; she had not forgotten. And I — I read and read again, with burning cheeks, till the shape of each letter was clearer in my heart than on the wax, and the more I pondered those hesitating, halting phrases the more deeply I was moved. She was calling me; this was her summons. And I, who had sworn by all the gods — what could I do? I



looked back over the interminable tumble of the waves, but even love could find no bridge. For I loved — I had never ceased to love her. My spirit groaned with the straining timbers as the ship laboured onward. I renewed my oath: I cursed my helplessness. At last, in the sheer desperation of one who thrusts down a goading memory and buries it in the darkest nook of his soul, I crept far forward through the shadows of the hold where the sheathing narrows to the ram, and hiding my tablet in a cavity among the braces, there I left it.

So the sun went down on Gorgo's message. We did not put to shore that night, but sailed on through the moonlight, while I paced the deck and watched the dancing lights, holding down my thoughts like one who fights with madness. At last, with a mind as cold and vacant as the paling sky, I stumbled down to my cot.

When I woke we were moored in the harbour at Corcyra; the market was already full, and we were taking on supplies. Then we launched out into the open. The shore sunk in the mists of the offing; the clouds ran low, and though the noonday sun was burning a great tawny hole through the midst of them it seemed as if setting in mid-course. The men grew restless; few had ever before been out of sight of land. The ship quaked and jarred on those uneasy waters like a wagon on a stony road. I stood by the pilot and helped him with the steering-oars.



"Did you hear what they were saying in Corcyra?" I asked him.

"Hear them," he grunted, pulling hard on the sweeps as we wallowed through a wave-trough, — "I heard and saw and smelt. I can smell out the weather on any sea. Steady there. We have saved a day to lose seven, if not ships and men. So I told your horse-trierarch, but the landsman was too wise for me. Now hold hard."

For some moments we struggled with the steering-gear. He laughed as I gasped in the spray. "You'll be well seasoned, lad, if ever we ground our keels in Sicily."

"You smell a storm, then."

"Smell it — a water-jug would smell it unless its nose was broken off. So I told yon land-loper, but he thought he smelt a bigger storm in Athens. Said I, 'My name's Meletus, but I don't care. My name's Meletus, but steering's my business, and I'll pilot you down Styx and Phlegethon, too, if that's the orders. But,' said I, 'this isn't like cruising round among the islands. There's a big barbarian wind coming down right out of Illyria, and it'll blow you to Africa if it doesn't blow you to Acheron.' That's what I told him."

And Meletus spoke no lying oracle; his nose was infallible. Soon the ship was rolling like a log, and four strong men were needed at the helm. The water rushed in at the ports, and we closed them — first the lower tier, then all — and set up the storm screens. The long sweeps were brought out



and worked from the deck to aid the pilot; but even so we could scarcely hold our course. The day went out on our right; the lanterns too went out, drowned in the smother of brine; and still we rushed on through Stygian night and the roar of Cocytus, with rearings on unseen waves and reeling plunges down slopes of darkness. Below all was tumult. We lurched from wall to wall with groans and curses; not even the sick could keep their beds. The ballast-stones swayed and ground; the swash of the bilge drenched everything. As many as could keep their feet toiled in relays with the bailing-buckets, but more rolled helpless amid the sliding debris. Then a great wave roared across the deck with a shock like the fall of a leaden dolphin; then another, and still another. The ship writhed on its billowy rack; the water gushed down from every crevice and rose till it swirled about our ankles; but after a shuddering pause we lifted, heaved upon a crest, and felt again the steady gallop of the swell. The motion was smoother now, yet little hope was left in that black hold. The vows that went up from its reek would have bankrupted Ecbatana, but some who prayed the less bailed the harder.

At last, when morning glimmered in the chinks of the storm-guards and hatches, I groped my way to the deck. The wind had fallen, but the very first glance made me giddy, for the ship was bounding skyward and toppling downward amid hills and chasms such as I had never seen on water. At the stern stood Meletus, still plying the sweeps,



belted with a section of rope made fast to a stanchion. His helpers were gone; his action was wooden and his face as empty of expression as a sheep's.

"Bring wine," he called.

I finally reached him with a leather flagon, and held the oars while he drained the contents undiluted.

"What, water! Nay, lad, I am full of it. The mixing-bowl is within me. I am already a tank for fishes." But his face grew red. "Mother of Bacchus!" he muttered, presently, "that was no drink for frogs, but Nisæan hot from the pitch. It has calked my ribs like a coat of tar."

He did not relieve me at the helm, but sunk back on his bench directing every turn. I could not choose; I obeyed in a sweat of terror. At length he broke into a laugh.

"Isn't this better than jogging on a nag? Here's a sea-horse worth riding."

I too was beginning to feel the wonderful thrill of it. But after a little, "Where are those that were with you?" I asked.

"Diving among the dolphins." He spoke grumly. "What would you have? Every sport has its hazard. The sea takes toll."

"And the rest of the ships?"

He pointed out two of them tossing in the distance. "They'll all find Catana if they're afloat," he said. "They can't miss such a beacon as Ætna."

The men from below were now crawling into



view. They cried to all the gods as they saw the sea.

“Hush and hide yourselves,” roared Meletus. “Dolts! have you no discretion? Would you bawl to the gods to founder us for a shipload of liars?” Then, turning, “Stay by me, lad. You have legs and a heart, — too good a man to consort with prancing beasts that steer by the snout. Stay by, and I’ll teach you to wag the tail of a ship; before we reach port you shall curb the sea-horse.”

He kept his promise. I did not cast away my bridle, but am ever in doubt which steed I like the better.

Four days we steered by the sun and stars; it was still so rough that we used but a single bank of oars. Our water was scant, our food spoiled by the sea; the hold was full of murmurs. Even Meletus chafed when the wine ran low, though he answered all complaints in his usual fashion:

“Hitch on with your horses if you want to tow. I’m only a pilot. We’re headed landward, for I smell the fume, but I can’t reef up a thousand stades of sea.”

During the fourth night he roused me. A red banner hung on the edge of the sky.

“Is it dawn already?” I asked, still in a daze of dream-fog.

He sniffed his contempt. “Do you seek dawn where you saw the sunset? The brute you ride has better wit. ’Tis the chimney of the earth-god, light-



ing upward. Nearer, you may hear the hissing of his forge."

"Tis *Ætna*," I cried.

Its dark cone rose on the horizon as the morning brightened behind us; the ruddy glow paled to a pennant of smoke, and this first caught the sunlight. Then the vast mass cast its shadow far inland, snow-streaked at the summit, belted with green below, sloping down to the cliffs that beat back the sea along ten leagues of coast. Leftward, close at its foot, lay Catana, like a nest full of eggs, — a low wall ringing a jumble of whited houses. The bight of the shore was lined with war-ships; the whole fleet of *Nicias* was moored there.

Thither we sailed; but when we had landed the earth seemed less steady than the deck. All that day the island heaved beneath my feet, and the fuming mountain wavered like a swaying mast.

"Is it always thus in Sicily?" I asked. "Is it the rage of *Typhon*?"

*Meletus* grinned broadly. "'Tis in the eyes," he said. "To such as stomach well the sea the god sends this land-sickness. I too am rolling, and my feet hit not well on the pavement. 'Tis the mark of a sailor born, and wine is the cure of it. Let us drink, lad, before we part."



## XX.

### *Days of Battle*

“OKOOK,” said Golas, “not, not” — and repeated it many times. Never before had I seen Golas frightened, not even on ship-board, though what his dumb soul suffered I know not. Now he cowered abjectly and grew rebellious in sheer terror. I had ordered him to mount his horse.

For Niciás, when we reached Catana, was away on an inland raid with most of the troops. I at once procured horses — the best money would buy — and tried to avail of the interval by teaching Golas to ride. A hard task I found it; the horse feared Golas even as Golas feared the horse. Once astride he fell forward and clutched the animal about the neck, so that she bounded off like a deer; but his frantic throttling soon brought her to the ground. Then, while she stood quivering under the hand of the groom, Golas would crawl at my feet and flatten himself in the dust. I did not spare him. Again and again I forced him to mount; and at last, in a measure, I gained my end. Not that he ever became a true horse-archer; shoot from a horse's



back he never would. When it came to that he would always spring down, set his foot on the bridle, and so let fly his arrows. Yet in time he learned to ride quite boldly, though in apish attitudes, with both hands almost on the bit. Two good steeds he spoiled with fright and wresting at the jaw, but the third took kindly to him. She would follow at call; a sort of love grew between them; and finally I believe he valued himself more on his riding than on the wonderful bowmanship which in him seemed mere instinct. For whatever mark he chose, within the wide compass of his weapon, he hit as surely and easily as when an artist stretches out his hand and touches here or there on a painted panel.

One day, when we were thus engaged with our horses on the plain before the wall, a great dust-cloud grew in the south, and out of it flashed the spears and helmets of the Syracusan cavalry. They bore down on us swiftly, but we made the gate in time; then, as we thronged the wall, their leader rode forth as if to parley.

"We hear," he called, "that you are merely come to settle in Catana. The city is small. We invite you to Syracuse."

Our captain stood near me. "We shall pay you a visit," he bellowed back in a flush of anger. "When we rap on the gates you may hear more."

The fellow put a hand to his ear. "We shall all troop out to welcome you," he cried, "but I did not catch the date. Is it this year or next?"



Our captain, too hot for words, signed to the men. In an instant the air was so clouded with missiles that the figure of the horseman blurred behind them; but all fell short. Even the leaden slugs of the slingers only beat up the dust before him and rolled about his horse's hoofs. He turned his back upon us in derision.

"Shoot," I whispered to Golas, "but not to kill."

I had scarcely finished when the mellow bow-string sounded. The raider flung up both hands to his helmet, whence the horsehair plume leaped off in a flurry of shreds. He scoffed no more; he spurred away like one who flees an ambush. Already another shaft was on his track, sailing high, so long in flight that I thought it fallen, — when, with a spurt from his scored flank, the scurrying horse sheered so sharply that the rider pitched headlong, yet leaped up without pause and ran on the sandals of Hermes. Indeed, he almost outran his steed. The whole troop gathered round him as he reached them.

We were shaking with laughter, and the bow laughed with us. It sprung like a mainstay plucked by the storm; a shimmer shot upward from the string. I found myself counting slowly; at sixteen the distant horses reared and plunged. And still the mirthful pæan of the bow rang out, its stinging jests still droned on the air; and the Syracusans, no longer feeling safe at any range, scattered from the plain in dusty panic.



After this the praise of Golas was upon all tongues. The troopers swore by Golas and Apollo in a breath; wherever we passed he was stared at with an admiration which he heeded no more than a hound at his master's heel. And chiefly because of Golas, who stood stock-still and grunted like a pig if any other bade him ride or shoot, I myself was made captain of the mounted bows.

The town was aswarm with soldiers now, for Nicias had returned; his pallid face glistened with anger, they told me, when he learned of the insolence of the Syracusans. He was convinced, at last, that it was time to strike; and when Nicias did strike he struck shrewdly, a quick, hard blow, like a boxer, who, after a weary while of idle fending, has caught his opponent off guard. Much, doubtless, was due to old Lamachus, whose burning eyes and grizzled hair ever reminded me of a pit of coals that glows the hotter for its crust of ashes. He hastened from man to man and ship to ship; he beat the laggards like a Spartan; a slave who attempted to signal the enemy he struck dead. In three days all was ready.

We boarded our galleys at nightfall, and the great fleet, crowded with men, moved silently down the coast. At midnight we beached our keels on a headland close above Syracuse, and while the seamen fenced the isthmus with vine-stakes the army deployed on the plain. With the first clear light we struck out for the heights that rise behind the city.



Already the Syracusans were astir: faces showed on the walls; a watcher waved frantic signals from the cliffs. But we had a long start and the shorter course. I raced up the steep at the head of my Scythians; the foot-soldiers followed at a steady run. I gained the summit through a rocky gap; my whole troop scrambled after with slipping hoofs. Thus far none had opposed us; yet the enemy, too, were coming fast. I could see them plainly now, rushing up from the marshes that border the bay, a long line of plunging cavalry and hurrying foot, winding toward us in a mottled streak like an angry snake. Their foremost horsemen had climbed the southern slope and were upon us before our main column had passed the defile in our rear.

Then was the bow of Golas first proved in battle. The leader of the advancing battalion paused on the hillside to form his line — out of range, as he thought. To him I pointed: the ever-ready weapon beside me lifted and leaped with one motion; the Syracusan bowed on the shaft and fell among the stones with crashing arms, while his horse sprang wildly down the track. But the rest — they had not yet learned their lesson. They charged us hotly, — a mere drove without order or command, but my archers never could have stood the brunt.

“Shoot!” I shouted. “Drain your quivers! Beat back their spears or we are spitted meat!”

The hill rang with the clang of bows and the rattle of falling bolts. Yet the charging horse came close; their javelins hurtled through our ar-



rows; but for Golas we could not have held them off. He swayed with his bow like a holm-oak pulsing in the wind. He chuckled with delight. His deadly barbs sped humming from the cord like a stream of wasps when they fly to sting. No armour could stay them. When we were hardest pressed, he shot through shield and breastplate, man and horse; and no Syracusan reached us. Then, as Lamachus mounted the crest with his labouring hoplites, the onset slackened, the assaulting spears drew back, and, pelted still with arrows, the enemy broke in tumult down the hill. Lamachus, sweeping the field with one wide glance, rode to my side and smote my shoulder with his palm.

“Well wrought, young soldier,” he said, heartily. “You, at least, were worth the teaching. You and your fifty bows have won the wedge that will split Syracuse.” He turned to Golas, whose shafts had not yet ceased to fly; they soared up with steep slant and seemed lost.

“Waste no good arrows, fellow. That bow of yours peals loud, but no mortal arm can strike at three stades.”

Even as he spoke a Syracusan sunk prone on his horse’s neck, and hung there while the steed dashed onward.

“Firebolts of Apollo!” cried Lamachus, “your stick has pinned him!” He swore the oath again in sheer amazement. “Son of Hagnon, the fellow is a prodigy. Let a stout shield attend him, and



a runner with sheaves of arrows. See, they are rallying yonder; they will try us with pikes."

For while we talked a dense array of Syracusan infantry had been gathering below as a pool fills from a running stream. They formed in phalanx, with deep files and narrow front. The trumpet brayed; they advanced with much tossing of brass.

Lamachus laughed. He had deployed his men on the brow of the hill, my bows in the rear with the slings and darts. "Begin at sure range," he said to me, "and volley them till we come within spear-touch. Then, down on their flank with your horse."

He rode back to his post. They were now so near that I could see the rivets of their shields. Their pace quickened; they surged up swiftly, but with swaying ranks. I signalled: a sleet of mingled missiles drove in their faces; their whole formation shook, but they ran on blindly under lifted shields. Then Lamachus roared to his hoplites: their pæan swelled; their steady line swept down the slope, each levelled lance as rigid as a trireme's beak. The wavering mass before them could not withstand the shock; the foremost fell; the hindmost broke and fled. And at that we, too, charged, galloping close on the flank of the fleeing mob, shooting them down with arrows as they ran from the spears, — until Lamachus, seeing much cavalry swarming up from the plain, called us back lest we be cut off. So ended that day's battle. The rest of the army, with Nicias, now was on the hilltop, and the Syra-



cusans slunk away to their city. We marched down to their very walls and defied them, but they dared not fight.

The post we had seized was the crest of a long plateau, which sloped and widened toward the town at its base, the edges dropping sheer on either side, with here and there a defile through which a rough track struggled up. It lay like a Titan's arm reaching out, palm downward, from the inland heights; while we, perched on the bony wrist, gazed down on a city spread, as it were, across the fingers, with a wall at the knuckles. The left hand I called it in my fancy; for the broad expanse of the southern bay filled the hollow between the extended index and the rocky ridge that formed the monster's thumb. We were soon to writhe in the gripe of that thumb and finger; but when we looked seaward on that second morning the view was fair to the eyes, and our hearts were beating martial measures.

If only I could have forgotten Gorgo! and I did, — there were hours when I did forget. This was one.

“What next?” I asked Lamachus, who stood near me. “Shall we storm their gates?”

“Nay,” he said, with suppressed impatience, “we shall take to building fences. The rest is to him.” He waved his hand toward Nicias, who was busily inspecting the ground below us. “He is minded to fight with baked mud and pointed stakes; I can only fight with spears. See, he is



planning to take them like hares in a mesh of his enginery. He is dainty of blood; he would open their gates with a Melian famine."

"It will spend the summer," I cried. And here the thought of Gorgo struck through me like a spinning dart. She had called; she waited!

"Aye," said he, "all summer and a thousand odd talents. The spear is swifter than the spade, and blood is cheaper than mortar; but Syracuse shall pay us back."

And she did, but not according to our hope. In words like these the gods let fall their warnings, but who can read them in the hour of action? They are not meant to save; the course of fate is not turned by oracles.

I must own that Nicias knew his craft. Not in vain had he worked the mines at Laureion; none could do more with wood and stone. First a castle went up on the heights to shield our rear; it hung like a sea-eagle's nest on the northern cliff, and was piled as quickly. Then, descending toward the town, he planted our camp in the middle of the slope and fenced it in a single day. Thence he laid his lines: our walls shot out on either side with embracing arms, which reached seaward so swiftly that the Syracusans were astounded. We could observe their tumult as one watches a chorus from the upper benches: they darkened the streets; they were massing behind the gates. The valves opened: their whole force swarmed from its hive as if to dash in our faces; but when Lamachus moved against



them with sunlit shields and the rhythmic clash of brass, they shrunk away and streamed back without a battle. Only the cavalry lingered to harass our convoys. Lamachus called me.

“This is yours; you must give them a run. Take all the horse and what you will of the foot. Teach them to keep their hoofs off the rocks.”

I set a spearman beside each horse, his left hand in the mane; I bade the archers aim low. One sharp charge did the work, for we caught them close by the cliffs, and our arrows crazed their mounts. Some went over the edge; the rest broke for the gates, while we all reined up and laughed to see how Golas kept them running. Their track was well blazoned with his trophies, each with a shaft between the shoulders; and after this our wagon-trains ran free.

The enemy fought no more in the open field. Henceforth they met Nicias with tactics like his own, crossing our line to the south with a stout stockade, while we were piling stone northward. But no fence of logs could stop Lamachus. Choosing the hour of noon, when many were napping, he charged them with a rush that bore down their stakes and sent the defenders in headlong flight. We pursued so hotly that some of our men pressed through the gate with the fugitives—and remained within. If the gods were good to them their period was short. The logs we threw down, and Nicias carted them off for better uses. He turned now to the southern wall, and soon brought



it to the point where the rocks pitch to the lower levels, rearing a tower against the face of the cliff to make good the junction. Thence we started across the marshes toward the harbour with a double wall of baked brick.

But here a new obstruction rose against us. The Syracusans again crossed our path, running a palisade through the swamp, cutting us off from the bay. This they reinforced with a moat, and the quaking morass in front was scarcely better. The space behind bristled with spears; the position seemed unassailable. Not even so was Lamachus daunted. He conferred with Nicias; he raided the villages, stripping the houses of planks and doors. With these we marched out in eager silence, dim in the morning mist, and flinging them down on the mud where the clay was stiffest, charged swiftly over the marsh; even horse could pass thus. The ditch we spanned with long ladders; the rattle of the iron hooks upon their fence was the enemy's first warning. They met us with desperate spears, but the column behind pushed us on. The great stakes tottered in the soggy soil: they fell; we rushed through; the panic-stricken guards fled before us. The moat was a gory clot of mud and blood; the corpses lay in its slime like mangled frogs: but the post was ours.

It was quite too soon to shout victory; that was yet to cost us dear — too dear. We had scarcely made firm our footing when all Syracuse was upon us; foaming horsemen, panting hoplites, darters



stripped for a race with death, all were there, surging against us with the fury of a failing hope. But we were of Athens, and Lamachus was still our leader. Our press of lances bore them back; their feet slipped in blood; shields swayed and sunk; steeds reared and screamed on the goading brass.

“Forward! Plunge with the pikes!”

We drove hard and our points bit deep. Their whole line quailed beneath the stroke: yelling with wounds and rage they thrust back fiercely, but their unison was lost; once more they broke in flight. And still the victory was not yet won, nor its price paid.



## XXI.

### *The Turn of the Tide*

“**T**HE horse! Mass horse and bows! Trumpet them up and follow close!” So shouted Lamachus — for me the grizzled veteran’s last command.

The routed foot were herding toward the town; already their van was tumbling through the postern; but the cavalry, cut off by our onset, had made for the bridge over reedy Anapus, which pours its deep tide through the swale to the bay. Here they had rallied: our best spears, disordered in the swift pursuit, were turned. The peril was instant, and Lamachus spurred to the rescue with scarce twenty behind him, crying to me as I have said.

My troop was dispersed in the riot of the chase: I formed them with all haste; but before we were fairly headed our rash commander, far in advance, was splashing up from the pools of the marsh on the flank of the foe. And there, as I plunged, bitter-hearted, through the clogging mire, I beheld a combat worthy of the Trojan plain.

A great horseman, with arms that blazed in the rising sun like Hector’s own, rode forth against



him, shouting defiance and calling his name. Our general — again I see it and my heart is bursting — the graybeard was still too young; not yet would old Lamachus stomach a challenge. I could hear his stern accent as he ordered back his men. Both sides stood fast, while the champions flashed together with stark spears levelled.

“Golas!” I cried. “Oh, Golas!” And then only did Golas shoot from a horse; and then only, and once again, did he miss. “Gods!” I ended, groaning.

The two steeds crashed and recoiled — riderless, for each lance was driven home through plate and bone; both spearmen fell, impaled on bloody ash.

“Upon them!” I thundered, in a voice like his that was silent. “Kill every man!”

We had reached the hard ground now and charged with souls that ached for vengeance, shooting as we galloped and from bowstrings that shrieked with rage. But our quarry did not await us; they dashed over the bridge to safety, bearing our dead and their own. To these Golas made additions, even then.

Again the day seemed won, but we lifted no pæan. My spirit had grown as dull and cold as his whose eyes see victory, but whose thoughts are all with the spear-blade sunk in his vitals. I slipped down from my horse and leaned upon his neck; and if there were tears —

The distant murmur of reviving battle roused me; it swelled from the heights we had left. I glanced



up: the whole space between the city and our line of wall sparkled with moving arms. All the hordes of Syracuse were mounting for a fresh assault, — and who was there to meet them? Only Nicias, grievously sick, with a train of slaves and builders, — Nicias, who had lain that morning prone on his bed, moaning, unable as it seemed to rise. My trumpet rang the alarm in jarring blasts. Again we floundered through the mud.

But this man who would sit and wrinkle his brow while others acted, could lift his anguished body when others faltered and guide a battle from a bed of pain. This the Syracusans soon discovered. They had almost reached him now. They were passing his outworks, flinging down the undefended hedge of pickets. If they paused before the wall it was only to wait for the ladders that trailed behind them.

“They are within: they have fired the camp,” I exclaimed in dismay.

But the smoke that I saw was not from within. It curled all along the wall-front, darting out red flame-blades at the slanted ladders, set already and already worse than worthless. The men leaped from the rungs like creatures caught on a grate, and still as the fire grew fiercer shrunk away, reluctant, wrathful, blistered in their brass. It was plain enough now. Between our outer pickets and the wall lay a mass of enginery, — stacked timbers, log piles, wagons, pitch, and cordage, with all the chips and splinters from the shaping axe. Amid these



Nicias had cast torches; he had reared a new palisade of flame, — a beacon, too, for our scattered troops, whose clamour grew loud in my rear as they gathered and ran.

We rode fast and the rising cliffs soon hid both fire and foe. When we gained the top the flames had fallen, but a rampart of embers glowed against the wall, and the stormers still held aloof in a wide crescent. Then, while we deployed for a dash on their flank, a great shout went up: they were turning; all eyes sought the bay. I also turned: the great harbour was flecked with ships, and through its narrow throat yet more were pouring in. Our whole fleet had joined us; sea and land were ours. The city, too, — it was doomed. What city? Even then, on the changeless roll of fate, the gods had written it, — Athens. But we said, Syracuse; and so said all men.

The very Syracusans had no better thought. They fled behind their gates and sallied forth no more. They watched us idly as we carried our double wall across the marsh, from the cliff to the bay. Not a spear was lifted when we raised a fortress close by the harbour's mouth, to rivet their fetter. Their only talk was of terms of surrender. Nothing could save the city now.

Thus it was noised through Greece; and of men, none doubted. The end was so near that we left the stones of the northern wall unplied as they lay in heaps on the slope to the sea; why build to-day and pull down to-morrow? Alas, that it



seemed so sure! In that hour the wheel of fate was turning.

For while those stones lay loose and the mortar was not yet mixed to bind them, four ships were slowly beating toward us from the shores of Greece. Only four ships.

“Pirates,” said Nicias, briefly, when the word was brought. “Mere pirates, to harry Italian villages. My task is here.”

Only four ships; but on one was a Spartan. Gylippus he was called. A small man, mean of aspect — but a Spartan. A miserly fellow, in a tunic short and patched and not too clean — but a leader of men. Well, old Boreas, ever friendly to his kindred in Athens, wrought his best to amend the neglect of Nicias. He smote hard on their sails and drove them over stormy courses; but at last they put in at Tarentum. Great was the interest of the Spartan when he heard of those stone heaps down by the sea.

“I hear that Gylippus has given us the slip and gone inland,” said Nicias; for at last he had sent an intercepting squadron — too late.

“They say he is raising troops for Syracuse,” I answered, — vexed, for this might mean delay.

“Yes, and Syracuse knows it,” said Nicias. He was paler than usual, and a cold sweat gleamed on his brow as the pain clutched his vitals. “A boat stole through last night with the news. But for that, the gates would have opened for us to-day. Yesterday all was arranged; now they whet their



spears. I have ever feared the gods were against us in this," he concluded.

"Finish the wall," I cried hotly. "With our circle locked I would defy the very gods."

His look was severe. "Such words invite their anger; such words, rash youth, have brought ruin to cities."

"Then let them bring ruin to Syracuse. My words on my head! Build the wall."

"Lamachus, too, would provoke them by hasty speech," he went on, mournfully. "And that Alcibiades! But I — I have never neglected the smallest point of duty." He bowed his head. "They are unforgiving. They rack me with agonies; they beset me with troubles for the fault of others. Yet the wall" — he groaned — "shall be built. There is time enough."

There was time. But the workmen fled and a remnant of stones still lay scattered when the Spartan paraded by with his motley three thousand, culled from all over Sicily. They passed us in battle array, marshalled under the forms of Lycurgus; they had been well drilled on the march. The whole force of the city trained out to meet them with pipes and pæans, while Nicias writhed on his bed. Not a blow was struck.

Then a trumpet came forth. "The clemency tendered by Sparta to the men of Athens!" He proclaimed it loudly, that all might hear. "Five days Gylippus grants them to leave Sicily with



ships and arms. But his mercy extends no further; from the fifth day it is war to the death."

To this insolence we made no answer, — not even a scoff. Among ourselves, perhaps, we sneered, but with bated breath. Sparta! the name was daunting, even to us. And thenceforth all went awry; it seems beyond belief that things could go so ill. But the moment when Athens might have seized the empire of the world had passed unused, and our fortunes ever slanted downward. Of this it seemed the visible symbol when we slipped from our point of vantage on the hill to camp in the foggy marsh below. Yet that soon came.

For Gylippus was certainly a man of conduct; his hand reached out at once to grasp the key of the siege. First, holding our forces in play by a show of spears before the wall, he himself with his bravest climbed against our castle on the heights. The surprise was perfect; not a man of the garrison was spared. Then, crossing our uncompleted wall with a traverse to the northern cliff, he blocked it forever, using the very stones that should have stopped him. Some sharp fighting there was, wherein I bore my part and took my first wound; but the rabble of islanders fought with Spartan tactics now, and Spartan discipline — for Gylippus would have no other — and they held us off with steady shields.

"The siege is ended." So I cried in my heart, — half-glad. So Nicias also thought, though far from gladness; for then it was that he led us quite



off the heights, down to our lines by the bay. We were both deceived: the siege was not ended, but reversed.

The foul reek of the swamp was about us; even water was hard to get. To find fuel and forage was yet harder; the Syracusan horse infested all the plain. Every day they swooped at us, — for venture out we must; and here I got a new wound, which healed but slowly. Like our commander we were sick in soul and body. Our allies were deserting; the enemy even vexed our corn-ships on the sea. So the winter closed in upon us.

Nicias had called me to his tent. A dark rain was pouring without; the rugs which his slaves had spread were damp. He had been writing a letter, and sat on the edge of his pallet with the unsealed tablets at his knee.

“This must go to Athens,” he said, heavily. “I have need of a trusty messenger.”

My heart bounded. He eyed me with a searching look. “You are young,” he continued, “young, and I fear profane — like the rest. But I know that Lamachus trusted you.” His eyes had grown moist. “That is something. Lamachus, though he judged ill of risks, was no mean judge of men.”

“He taught me all I know of fighting. I loved him.”

“He is with Persephone; I trust he was a true initiate and faithful to his vows. But the question is not of Lamachus. By his death I am left sick and alone. My burden is too great for me.” His



look was woeful. "I must be recalled, son of Hagnon."

"Let all be recalled," I cried. "Why fight longer against the Spartans and the gods?"

"That is the tenor of it. But the city will not listen; you know the people. I need not a messenger, but an advocate."

"I will plead — as we plead before them for our lives."

"It is no less: you will plead for many lives; you will plead for Athens. But you know how to talk to them. You have a tongue; your words hit straight. I have heard, you see, of your bout with Pisander." He smiled wanly. "But my envoy must return. He must swear it, — by the dark gods and the three avengers he must swear."

I startled at that; but there was no retreat. He led me to a little shrine beside his bed and I swore as he bade me. He read me the letter, sealed it, and laid the tablets in my hands.

"Now go: your trireme is manned and on the water. You will meet rough weather, but one Meletus will be your pilot, — a sure rudder." He sunk back faint, for his spasm had come and the pain was cruel.

"Nicias," I exclaimed, "sail with me. Let all sail with me, and absolve my oath."

His smile was ghastly. "Have you, then, a fair mistress in Athens? But the people would never endure it. Go: tell them of this."

His physician rushed in with the slaves; and I sailed alone.



## XXII.

### *The Riddle Solved*

“WELL, lad,” said Meletus, as we swung on the sea with full banks beating against a light head-wind, “have you had enough of them?”

“What?” I answered, bewildered; for I was deep in thought.

“Those brute nags. Those dancing caravels that make a tempest with their own four legs and pitch in a dead calm. They make me seasick — those ground-hoppers.”

“What do you know about them?” I asked, with some interest.

“I know all about them. I’ve been on deck. Those fellows at Catana ran me up the ladder, — the god’s fire-fork split them!”

“You!”

“Yes, me! By all the little gods that perch behind our rudders, me! Am I a lying walker on mud to mis-steer with the tongue? Oh, be sure, I had a fine freight of vintage in the hold, stowed away good and dry. They’d got me started up that cursed Ætna to see where the fire came from.” His eyes sought mine with a furtive squint.



“ You climbed to the chimney of Typhon ! ”

“ Not so far, lad. Not above half a league — or a league and a half — I know not. ’Twas prow up all the way, and choppy ; the wind frailed out, too, and I tired of such hard pulling. Then they laid alongside with this nag, — stilted up, mind you, like a hulk in the yards ; but they lent me a hoist and I swung aboard by the fore cables. Then all at once she was plunging on a stiff sea.”

“ You mean that they got you drunk and led you up a precipice and put you on a Sicilian horse ? ”

“ Well, doubtless I was as drunk as needful, as you might know. But I blame them not for that. ’Twas much as you say, I surmise ; I think I told them I could steer such a cockle down Phlegethon. But the tackle was not to my mind ; the rigging was all clumped about the beak, and when I reached back for the rudder the sweeps wouldn’t bite. Then I reached both ways ; ’twas the stern-post I had hold of, I fancy.” Again he leered, as I laughed.

“ Anyhow, we ran down the roughest course I ever pointed. I was seasick, I tell you — right sick ; the lift of the swell would have sickened Poseidon. A tangle of brailing lines whipped at my face in the gale ; ’twas an ill-trimmed craft. I think I had what they call spurs at the cat-heads, and I sent them aft for anchors.”

“ And still you are alive,” I choked.

“ I was none so sure of that, my lad, when I flipped over the bulwarks and splashed in the dust. I had lost my bearings ; I conceived I had gotten



a fall to the deck. 'Twas no soft brine I struck." He paused. "The Lord of Olympus blast those fellows! They said I was stretched for swimming when they hauled me in. But a flagon mends all."

I knew well what he wanted. The sea was low, and we made a sailor's night of it.

But I could not drown my restlessness in wine. Something lay in my soul, just beneath the groping fingers of my thoughts. In my sleep I am sure it rose clearly; but when I awoke I had lost it. Yet something lingered. Some faint impression deeper than the eyeball; a filmy flush as of remembered roses, not seen but felt, and with it such a sense of sweetness, beyond all roses! It must be — nothing else was like that. Gorgo! my soul had felt her kiss. Then, as the rose-light faded — yet the sweetness was still around me — on a dusky background, traced with curves and angles, I read —

I started up, cleared my eyes and looked about. The ship shook with the even pulse of the oars; the shadow of the pennant quivered on the deck: it was almost noon. The sail, now set, was clouted with a patch; the swinging ladder showed a broken step; the very planking seemed familiar. I noted the knot beside which I had lain as I pored upon Gorgo's letter. Her letter! It still lay in the timbered gloom at the roots of the ram. I soon had it forth.

But grievous was my disappointment. I could scarcely force open the tablet. The hot Sicilian sun had made the place an oven, and the wax had



run; not a dint was left of all that Gorgo's hand had printed. "Yet" — after a sigh — "it matters little," I thought. "I have only to close my eyes to see it as it was, — every stroke of the stylus." Then, suddenly, where the wax had left the wood I perceived faint markings.

"Fool!" I cried in my heart. "Oh, thick-skulled Bœotian! Was this the keen Athenian wit to which she trusted?" For the words that were melted from the diptych flashed up within me in characters that flamed with light. A child could read their meaning: —

*Perhaps — if you are he — you will think there is something beneath all this — these words are so shallow. Perhaps, if they seem too cold, you can find a way to warm them.*

The sun-god had solved my riddle; I had found the way — at last. With a heated strigil I scraped the clotted wax from the cypress; and a maze of letters lay before me, pricked deep in its substance in crowded lines, close-packed. I read them slowly: my heart was throbbing with the flutter of a sprung bowstring: —

*Yes, it is I, Gorgo — she that once — so strange a thing for her to do — the same Gorgo that kissed you, boy, on the lips. But you know already, and you do remember — else you would never have found me here, my very self, under the wax. And — I love you, Athenian boy — O boy, more than ever — for that comes first and is most of all. And*



*I keep my promise, and will always. But whether I can always keep it and keep this Gorgo too I do not know. Yet I would not call had I not sworn. For if I call you will come, and then, I think, we will soon both be dead. Myself, I would not care so much then. We would just go together, wherever it is — and I would much rather be there with you than anywhere with Lysander. But I will maybe have to go there alone — unless you can find another way. O boy — if you really do love that Gorgo and know of any way, come now and save me. Yet if you don't see a way, don't come. Don't come to die. For I will wait yonder just as I promised here — and after a long time you will come and find me, even in that darkness.*

*But know that I that write am writing truly and am truly Gorgo — with whom such words were spoken — since for this she learned writing, and not for the accounts, as she told some one. Yet she does keep the accounts, for he is old and cannot see clearly, and will trust no other. And if you will come in spite of all, this is the beginning:*

*At the place they call Malea, where the waves beat so loud — and some say that he who goes there must bid farewell to home and friends, but I hope it is not so — at that place is a shelf of the rock, high over the sea. And there this Gorgo has stood sometimes, watching for a ship that might come — but she cannot go often, for it is far and so hard to make excuses. On that shelf is a hut where a helot sleeps, and the wife of the helot is a servant to*



*Gorgo. He is true and has been told, and if he be there he will come down quickly when you wave your arms with fingers clasped about the wrist — or if any one speaks to him of pearls he will know surely. But if that man is not there, it is thus:*

*The face of the cliff you cannot climb, but for one who creeps forward a little, close under the shadow of the rock if it be morning, for him there is presently a path — and this you must climb with bare feet, lest you slip. Do not hasten because you think that Gorgo may be there, lest you slip. And do not linger in the hut, lest another come, for he too has been in that place — Lysander. But look about quickly and by the edge you will see a great stone, that looks as if it might fall, yet a strong man cannot move it. From that stone a rope hangs behind bushes — and by the rope one may reach a path, and by the path a little cave under the rock — which Lysander does not know, but only the helot and Gorgo. There wait — or if you cannot wait leave a writing, and Gorgo will surely see those words.*

*But do not come unless you see another way than to fight with Lysander. He is so terrible, that Lysander, when he may not have his wish, and Rhyzon has told him — but not what Rhyzon did not know. For Gorgo has never told anything, nor forgotten — not one least word, Athenian boy.*

I arose with trembling knees and set teeth. I seemed again to feel that kiss upon my lips, and



with it the bite of Spartan spears. But my mind was made up. It might be too late, it might cost me all the blood that Syracuse had spared, but I never would pass that ominous Malean headland without a trial. Oath or not, I would make the trial; not to Nicias only nor Nicias first had I sworn. I would keep both oaths if I might, — but death absolves.

I strode aft. “Meletus,” I said, without preface, “you must make room in the hold for two horses.”

“Horses!” he roared, “by god’s trident I had thought the lad was mending, and he is seized with a fit of horses in mid-sea. But take wine, lad: it will pass.”

“Be still. You must find me space for two horses under deck.”

“I must find him space for two horses! It shall be hellebore, not wine. Horses! and naught but good water down the offing. But I myself have seen those beasts after much wine. The lad is not yet seasoned.”

“For two horses,” I repeated, “to be taken on at Corcyra. Cease your bellowing and mind the rudder.”

“The lad mends a little. He no longer thinks to have his horses from the stables of Poseidon. I am loath to pour hellebore down his throat, and a flagon may serve. But two — he said two — yea, two horses! Can it run in the poor lad’s fancy that I, Meletus, as having lately learned to ride — ”

“Never think it,” I cried. “My companion will



be no mellow old pilot, whooping about Phlegethon, crossing his legs for a better hold on the ground and viewing his steed as a thing on a line of stilts in the dazzle of his wine."

"How else would I mount the rigging of a horse? and as for the number of props, they do vary with time and circumstance. Yet why do I reason with the lad? He has turned red from pale: it is but the wine; his long mispractice gives his conceit this aspect. Lad, there is no horse near you. Doubtless he, too, thinks to nag it up a mountain side and see Typhon blow fire from his nostrils."

"Yes," I said, "I shall ride straight up a mountain and hope to see there the reddest fire that ever glowed; but I ride not with anchored spurs nor gripping the tail." And I turned on my heel.

"I mind not," he muttered, "but thus it is to ride horses. The god of the centaurs nags him still for past follies."

Despite the dismay of Meletus we put in at Corcyra. Good chargers were scarce, but gold will buy bread from famine, and I presently had on a noble pair, — deep-chested, wide in the hoof, such as gallop the sands about Cyrene and will run all day without rest or drink. They would both come at call and turn at a touch; their eyes were like a girl's. I made love to them even on shipboard, and soon they would lay their soft muzzles caressingly on my shoulder.

And now at last, after much ill weather, the Malean cape rose in view. It was just at sunset, but



I could easily descry the goatherd's hut; no human figure was visible. That night, not without hazard, we landed the horses; and while Golas held them just beyond the surf, —

“Meletus,” I said, “stand out with safe seaway until noon to-morrow. Watch the rock, and if you see my signal put in quickly with a tender and the best oars. Nay, old sea-hound, it will be no matter of horses; rare chargers they are, those two — but if fortune serves so well I will even leave them on the Spartan plain as a ransom for her I bear away.”

I heard him slap his thigh. “By the fifty loves of Father Jove, this is better. A lass — I might have known; but my wits made some shift of ballast on yon *Ætna*. I will stand by, and at signal take you off though it were the black coast of *Acheron*. But how then, lad, if you signal not? The gods defend you, *Theramenes* — is it in your thought to run before a Spartan tempest on such craft as the mares?”

“If by midday you see no signal, make on for Athens with quick pipes and full banks. There deliver the letter that lies under my pallet. And mix no wine with public business.”

“Never sheer for that: I am no way minded to mix my wine with a grinding of the hemlock. But you, lad? In this affair of a lass, if by taking passage with you —”

“You must speed the letter. As for myself, I have sworn. It shall be as it may.”



“Swear not too deeply, lad, and choose well your oaths. With a lass a sweet, soft, harmless oath serves every need. I myself, in these matters of lasses, swear mainly by the gods of Egypt, within whose grasp I seldom come. In truth, I now sail wide of that coast. Or swear by the goose of the prow, lad — it is a gentle, wooden thing; or, if that suits not, by the fan of Aphrodite, which blows up no gales to founder ships.”

“Make no lurch on the letter,” I called after him. And so we parted.

With Golas, who could see in the night like a prowling fox, I led back from the shore a little and stabled the horses under a thicket. Then, as the mist began to whiten, I groped out the path and climbed upward alone. It was well that I had heeded Gorgo's caution, for the steep track was glazed with dew; soon I hung in a cloud, all gray above me and beneath. Lizard-like, flattened against the rock, I crawled on until the fog rolled far below; and here the path turned and led seaward, edging the cliffs and almost halting my heart with its narrowings. Yet the end of this goatish scramble was indeed the shelf of rock. The hut was empty; I swung down by the perilous rope, found footing and presently the cave.



## XXIII.

### *In the Grotto of Gorgo*

THE cavern, too, was empty. It was no deep vault — scarcely more than a balcony beneath an overhang of rock, fronted and shielded from eyes below by a lift of wall like a balustrade, in part natural and partly piled of rough stone. In the deepest recess lay a pile of fleeces, and behind them several jars of wine; also a number of Laconian cheeses in willow crates, well gnawed by mice, and barley cakes nibbled about the edges. Of Gorgo I saw no trace. I made, however, a hearty meal — for my stomach pined — then turned to the front.

The ship of Meletus lay heaving just under me — so it seemed; yet doubtless the distance was many stades. Her oars were out, but they merely swung with a light plash backward to hold away from the rocks. In an instant all was commotion; the pipes blew shrilly and the prow leaped forward. I almost cried out: it still lacked much of noon. Then, glancing westward, I saw three Spartan galleys bearing down with all the impetus of bending spruce. Meletus fled before them, drawing far out



from land. I laughed in my heart, for the spaces widened, — then sighed — the horses were now my only hope. I could not in fairness blame Meletus — but while my thoughts excused him his galley wheeled in a foaming circle; a swift swoop sheared from the foremost Spartan half her oars; a sharp turn cleft the second amidship. The third, rearing on the sudden back-thrust of her oars, put about and made good flight; though I have learned since that she was taken off Cythera. But Meletus did not pursue; while one of his victims sunk with all on board and another drifted toward the rocks with broken pinions, he swung back to his post. He glanced up: I noted that now the deck-shadows lay straight toward me. Three times he gazed; I fancied that he even saw me, but he shook his head and turned. Yet again he faced the rock, and his hoarse voice floated up faintly.

“I go, lad, — but this blows in the teeth of my liking. I know not if I bawl to aught but ears of stone; but the gods defend thee, lad, from man and beast.”

The oars dipped, the ship glided from before me; it was soon far down the eastern water-slope. I drew back rather drearily, cast myself on the fleeces to meditate, and slept.

I dreamed of the Syrian. Again I was a child: his claw was on my throat, his hissing whisper in my ear. I awoke with a scream, — which swelled in my breast and ebbed away without sound. A broad hand was over my mouth; a swart face looked



into mine; behind, all was dark, but a lamp-horn, set on the ground, shone up faintly. "Best not make noise," said the lips.

"Pardocas!" I gurgled through his fingers: they relaxed.

"What that? Best not make loud oath. Spartans down yonder — their ship break up on rocks. But give word, or perhaps I call them."

The face was not black, though dusky with tan and shadow. The look was kindly.

"Botas!" I whispered.

"Yes, Botas. I think you know word. Best give word."

I was sitting up now. "Is it not pearls, Botas? I am come to take them, Botas, — all my pearls. Yet some I have already; and of others I have lately seen the print — on the wax, Botas."

His rugged visage melted into something child-like. He clasped my knees.

"She will be glad. It has been much time. I am her helot — I am Botas, that bore the wax. She will be glad. My wife, too, is hers, in Sparta — not like me — more beautiful, like her."

I felt the wrinkle of a frown but lost it in a smile.

"Your helot too I will be. She said it — Botas, helot of Hagno's son of Athens, where they beat not. I will tend your goats. Lysander's helot I will not be. She will be glad: it was near time. But she said, 'He will come, Botas — he that speak of pearls — Hagno's son. He with eyes like mine,'



she said — so it is, master — ‘for we both,’ she said, ‘of Ion. Or perhaps he lift arm, thus. Watch, Botas,’ she said, ‘and serve him.’ But Lysander she hate. It was time.”

“Lead me,” I cried, “to Sparta — to Gorgo. Lead me the nearest way.”

“No, no! she said not lead to Sparta, but Botas bring word quickly — and to keep very far from Lysander. I am her helot: I obey her.”

I thought a moment. “Can you ride,” I asked, “and lead a horse?”

“I ride my donkey,” he answered, “till she die. Yes, I can lead. But you stay in cave.”

“I too obey her. I will furnish you with better than a donkey, yet as kind. Take the lamp and guide me down the path.”

Never before, I think, nor ever in all the ages since, was helot goatherd so mounted. I grieved, at first, for the horses — they too have their pride of birth — but he used them humbly.

“I been groom once,” he said.

Yet even Golas gave them up to him rather grudgingly. Indeed, Golas seemed suspicious of the whole affair — almost sullen. He had an old stone-headed arrow, which he always carried in his quiver but never shot; this he drew out, and muttered over it.

“Botas,” I said, “ride fast. Bring her quickly, and you shall be no more a helot; return without her, and you shall be a helot no more.”

“Best wait in cave,” he called back.

I turned toward Golas. He had fitted his arrow



on the string. "Put it away," I cried sharply, — "what do you mean?" And it rattled back into the quiver.

I led him up the hill to the hut, and there we rested, for I dared not venture the rope without light; already I had stumbled twice in the darkness, and but for Golas would have fallen. Not until almost daybreak, though the mist still veiled the valley, did we defy the precipice and creep to the cavern; where I watched all day and deep into the night. Then —

I sprang up. A red sun-shaft was streaming across the balcony; and in its rosy radiance, yet with a glow far brighter —

"Athenian boy" — it was like the uncertain warble of a brook. "Oh! this is not — yes, you are, that same boy, but — oh, what can I call you now?"

She had shrunk a little, but I bound her in my arms and held her fast. For a moment she fluttered like a bird when a sudden hand is laid upon it; she glanced swiftly into my eyes; with a long, soft sigh she hid her face on my shoulder. And a wee voice close beneath my ear, — "You frightened me, boy," it said. "But you have come, and I am the gladdest maid in this Hellas. For at least, if it is only for a little while, we shall live and die both together now." Our hearts were beating close, as once before. I could not yet utter one word. And right here — it was a grim interruption.

Golas, too, had leaped up. He stood gazing; he saw that I loved her; the wild beast in his soul



crouched and roared. But he paused; still he gazed, — for her beauty was of that sort which quenches the rage of lions. He hung in doubt whether to slay or to fall at her feet. He snatched from his quiver that old stone-pointed arrow; he strained it to the head, his fingers shaking on the string.

She had started from me as water flows from the grasp; she stood out before him in the crimson glory of the sunrise, blushing with love and morning light. “Then kill me, fellow,” she panted, in breathless tones, that only quaked with joy, “kill me, if so the gods have willed it — now.”

The string slipped — but while the murmuring flint rushed with unsteady flight against the clouds, Golas, prone on the rock, lifted her buskined foot in both his hands, and set it on his bow and worshipped her.

“Helot, too — Gola,” he whined. My knife was at his neck; she plucked me back. “You shall not harm him, Hagnon’s son. See, he is mine. You have lost —”

“A slave — a helot to your dowry, Gorgo. A beast — a forfeit to my dagger. I have lost more — all that was mine. But I have gained —” and I finished with sweet revenge upon her lips. “Beloved” — and I repeated it, like one insisting — “Beloved, I have gained a city. I no longer serve the many, as at Athens, but am become a tyrant, more jealous than Hippias. Gorgo my city is called — the fairest in Hellas, well peopled with two souls, mine and thine. Its walls are of the Parian marble,



Gorgo; and its battlements shall be crowned with gold and its citadel looped with pearls — it shall be my Ecbatana. There will I reign ever, in wealth that shall shame the Persian; and this have I wrested from Sparta.”

“Not yet,” she sighed. But again I used my tyranny upon her lips.

“Boy! boy!” she murmured. “But, indeed, it was this maid that first begun it. And who knows if to-morrow —” but the rest was left unspoken.

“Is this truly that Golas,” she cried, “of whom such rumour has been in Sparta? For they say he can shoot the stars off the sky! Yet he missed, and his bow was beneath this foot! I felt it purr under my foot — the great bow that was going to kill me!”

“If ever again he lifts his bow against the stars of heaven no sudden helotry will save him. But when you stood before him, Gorgo, like Athena sprung down from Olympus, he could not slay an immortal goddess.”

“Oh, boy! it is sweet to say, but such words could never have saved me. That was a terrible arrow, so sharp and jagged, and when it screamed at me the sound was like no other I ever heard. It would have gone through that shield of Heracles, I think. But am I indeed still like her — to you, Hagnon’s son?”

“No, Gorgo; the goddess has meanwhile aged. She was new that day.”



“Don’t!” She lifted her sweet, shocked face in the sunlight. “Dear goddess,” she prayed, “do not be angry. And hear me, beautiful goddess. Grant me that I may still be like you, just a little, in the eyes of Hagnon’s son, because he loves me; for I am only a mortal, and the time is so short.”

“Best go now to horses,” said Botas.

The first to reach the shelf was Gorgo. I followed and was half-way up the rope, but dropped back at the sound of Golas tuning his weapon. The arrow was already sped.

“Man down yonder going to shoot,” explained Botas. “He not shoot now.”

I peered out through the bush. A little party of Spartans were hurrying along the beach, bearing an idle burden.

“Slave, you shot without signal,” I cried.

“Shoot for Gorka — Gola helot,” he stuttered, with unwonted loquacity, his eyes turned upward.

“Come!” she called.

We made for the plain with all the hazards of haste. We reached the horses: a score of Spartans were running toward us, but not eagerly; only one was mounted.

“Botas,” I said, and filled his palm with gold, “take this; buy freedom or what you will. Escape to Athens when you may.” Then to Golas: “Hold them off till they scatter too widely; strike the horse if he comes within shot. That done, follow trail.”

“You ride well?” I asked, as I lifted Gorgo.



"Not well, but as I must," she answered. "And, indeed," as we bounded forth from the thicket, "in this hour I would even fly, if you set me on wings. For he that is on the horse is that Lysander."



## XXIV.

### *A Ride up Phounias*

**A**FTER we had galloped for a space I looked back. The Spartans, less numerous now, were holding far aloof; the horseman was making a wide circuit.

“Gorgo,” I asked, leaning toward her as our horses ran neck and neck, “do you know the way that leads by Cynuria to Argos?”

“By the place of the slain? Only to the foothills,” she gasped, tossed by the swift stride of her steed. “Must we pass by the field of the dead? That is an awful spot; the shades, they say, come out each night, and fight in armour that shines in the moonlight but makes no sound. And the way that leads up from the plain is to and fro on the edge of a dreadful torrent. That I have seen, — white-plumed and black-hearted; it will be so now. Its very name is murder.”

“Phounias,” I cried. “Twice have I been by that road; and the good gods be thanked for it.”

We had not abated our speed, but thundered through the little villages, while the helots fled from before our plunging hoofs. She was riding more easily now.



"It is quite the very next thing to flying," she panted. "I did not know there were such horses. Lysander will have no such horse as these. You are wonderful at finding ways, Hagnon's son. And I think you are braver than any Spartan," she added. "I too will be brave when we come to that place." Then, after a little, as we raced across the crackling fields of stubble, — "What name shall I call you, Athenian boy, that are grown so big and wise? What name shall I call my — oh, I cannot say it! You are grown a man — as masterful as Lysander — and you ride much better. I would not dare now to be the first to kiss — and how did I ever? I am scared to look at you, boy, this day. But tell me whose — no, I cannot!"

I reached for a flickering kiss. "I can say it, Gorgo, — his plighted bride, and soon his wedded wife! And the name — what other than just as before? But they call me Theramenes; and that it is truly time for you to know."

"Theramenes! Indeed, it was like some great wild beast that you seized me, jumping out of the cave. But I never shall call you that; it trickles too lightly over the tongue. I shall call you Theramnas, — and the sound of that is sweeter, like a kiss. So, Theramnas!"

Our pace had fallen to a soft lope; we almost stopped as we leaned for the kiss. Then, roused by a pat on the shoulder, our steeds leaped onward. Soon the roar of Phounias was in our ears.

Well that it was so near! The whole country-side



was now astir: shields lifted in the sunlight, flashed signals from post to post; a beacon waved its smoky banner from the hills. Already I saw a troop of light-armed runners hastening to cross our track.

“Cling!” I cried, and smote the horse of Gorgo sharply on the flank, touching my own with the spur; they both broke away like the wind. The runners paused; their arms swayed toward us: loud was the murmur of thong-darts as we passed, but the distance was too great. We clambered the slope; we dashed up the defile, beside the foaming waters.

The track was but the selvage of the stream, lapped by its surge. It narrowed; the wall of rock rose sheer from black eddies; but our chargers rushed through without pause, and again found margin for their steady hoofs. This too fell away before the encroaching cliffs; five times we struggled through from bank to bank. Then the rocks spread back; the current brawled wide and thin on the upper levels: the peril was past.

Gorgo was white as the foam. “I shall never again be quite the same after that,” she whispered. But we still fled on through a labyrinth of glens and glades, though the sides of our horses were heaving and I softened the pace. But this would not do: their straining tendons could not endure forever — nor could Gorgo, who drooped as she rode, wan as the lichened oaks.

I drew rein at the door of a herdsman’s hut and burst the hinges. The place was deserted, but well stored with food; we ate and drank in its gloom,



then fed our quivering steeds with barley cakes and gave them water mingled with wine.

“I just love them,” said Gorgo, again growing buoyant. “None in Sparta will ever believe it, that any creature could pass up Phounias when the water cries; and while they are watching to take us out below we may yet escape. I can now almost think we shall escape, Theramnas.”

I held her hand tightly. “You must now give back my pearls,” she said, suddenly. “You will need them no more, for you will have the very Gorgo that wore them.”

“Yes,” I answered, vaguely.

“For don’t you remember? I only gave you those to keep for me — till now. See, boy!” and she drew from under her mantle a small embroidered bag. “I have brought them with me — all the rest. Those only I took away from Sparta — the jewels that were my mother’s, in Ionia.”

I thought with a pang of the dusty casket left in my chamber. But what did it matter, when Gorgo herself —

“Lycurgus did not approve of them,” she went on, gaily, “and I think it was like an old man with just one eye not to. Least of all did he like the kind a certain maid’s ears are pricked with dimples for the wearing of — and that thing the Ionian women did for this Gorgo, not waiting to be asked. But I think it would never have been her wish to deny them. I do not agree with Lycurgus, but like that kind the best of any; and what else the little round



lobes are for I cannot see. When we come to Athens," quoth she, "I will wear all my jewels all day, and all the days, may I not? Or do you too have Ephors and peevish elders, that mutter of foreign women and outlandish customs, and send rude messages?"

I laughed. "The Eleven have never yet ground hemlock because of pearls," I assured her.

"Then give me mine," she persisted, "to put with the rest."

"Let me keep them," I faltered, "until we are sitting side by side, like this, in the house of Hagnon."

"Yes, Theramnas," she said, very softly, "you shall keep them for me till then, if you care so much. But show them to me now; for they say that pearls grow more beautiful if one carries them long close against the heart."

"But I cannot, Gorgo."

"You cannot! You cannot show me my pearls!" The cabin rang with her tone, and the horses neighed and pawed by the door.

"They are still in Athens, Gorgo." I felt horribly ashamed to confess it; yet I could not see that it mattered.

"You have given my pearls to another, Hagnon's son." She wailed the words as if I had lain dead at her feet. "You have given the pearls off my wrist to some painted thing in your Athens. I will not share with her, son of Hagnon. I have seen her in dreams — that woman."



“Dreams, indeed!” I cried, hotly. “What ails you, Gorgo? It is false! It is false as a Thracian’s oath.”

“I think I would not speak of oaths, this day; and I wonder what gods there were left that you swore by, Hagnon’s son, to her. Oh, but it must be a dream — like those I waked from. I cannot lose you, boy, — not so. Do not vex me, Theramnas, when I am so weary, but draw out the pearls from where you have them hidden, and wind them on my wrist.” And she held it toward me.

“Now that is more like Gorgo,” I said, much relieved. “But I told you true; they are even in Athens. Could I bear pearls beneath my corselet in battle, or leave a casket of jewels in the straw of my tent? Have some reason, Gorgo. When you reach out your arm in Athens I will twine it for you, and heap your lap with thrice as many of what kind you will.”

“You mean you would buy them for me, son of that Hagnon, — you would buy me jewels — out of the shops! I do not wish others, but these. Or perhaps you would manage somehow to get them back — from her! But I never will wear them again, after her.”

“Hush!” I cried. “I will not listen to such words. I did not think the world held such a maid.”

“Indeed! I would hope she is different. And I think the world will not much longer hold her, either.”

“Gorgo!”



"You need not listen. But the horse you will have to loan to me again. I will ride the poor beast very slowly now, and I will surely send her back to you from Sparta, — unless that Phounias — but I cannot think Phounias will be so kind."

"Gods of Olympus!"

"Is it those that you swear by? I would not dare myself; but perhaps it is not true that they punish. Or if you think they did not hear you or have forgotten, you need not fear that Gorgo will ever remind them. But this I would advise you, Hagnon's son, to ride on quickly and not wait in these hills for Lysander; and that is good counsel."

"It is Lysander, then!" My face burned; my voice jarred like an ill-blown trumpet.

She searched my face, but would not meet my eyes. "I hate Lysander," she said. "But in Sparta they do not think of women as at Athens; they vex but they do not scorn them. And Lysander is of Sparta; he would never have given my pearls to any other — not one pearl."

Then first I became aware of certain possibilities of rage in my nature. I cursed Lysander foully, and all Sparta, — and the folly of men and the madness of women. I swore by the Stygian lake, and the rivers that roll in darkness, and the dusky shapes that lie blotted in Tartarus.

"I think it was black enough before," she said, coldly. "Will you loan me the horse?"

I curbed my anger with such effort as flings a steed on his haunches in full charge. "Gorgo" —



and I felt my own voice quivering in a deep, hushed note — “ I swear no more by any god or any dæmon; for if Gorgo’s love is not enough to believe my simple word in this, I never will try to convince it.”

“ Oh! ” she said.

“ That I sailed without those pearls is true; but I sailed for war, and as I thought for death. I deemed that yon Lysander had already taken Gorgo.” She started and turned. “ For nine years no word had come from Sparta; the wax was not yet. But that ever I gave your token to another, or showed it to any eyes but my own, — that, Gorgo, is so false that I will never trust my tongue to speak of it again.”

“ Boy! boy! ” she began, “ if only — ”

“ Hush, Gorgo! or you will relent — and that would shame a Spartan. Mount hastily, Gorgo — for the horse is yours — and go while the pride of Sparta serves you; I shall not speak another word to hinder or convince.”

“ Oh, boy! if only — ”

“ Only this, — for the fault I own to I will ask you to forgive me, Gorgo, before you ride away to drown in Phounias and I go to meet Lysander.”

“ No, no, Theramnas! ” She had clasped my knees and shook me with her sobs. “ It is for you to forgive this Gorgo — and she never will vex you in that way again.”

“ That, Gorgo, I do not quite believe; nor am I sure I would even wish it. Yet before this hour I



would have believed you in anything, Gorgo — unless you had told me of this cabin.”

“It is terrible — worse than Phounias. I love that Phounias now. But let us leave this place — forever.”

“It is time. But this I must tell you, Gorgo. I have feared your Lysander. For I think that if Hagnon’s son had not come to Sparta it would have been Lysander. And then Lysander would have been less terrible, and I should have served only Athens. But I do not fear Lysander now. That fear I leave shut in this cabin.” I lifted the door to its place.

“And that is a rickety door,” she laughed, “to hold back such a fear; but I think now it will serve us, Theramnas.”

The day was waning fast as we galloped off, threading our way through the oaks. The trailing mistletoe brushed in our faces.

“My poor helot,” she said, as we rose on the higher slopes, — “that strange-speaking Golas! I fear I have lost my helot — that I won from you, Theramnas, at peril of my very life.”

“And for that he might well die, Gorgo; if he dies to save you I may perhaps pardon him. But I think him safe. None is likely to come near enough to harm him. And though he lacks speech he has the knees of a stag and all the senses of a fox. It may be long, but he will follow. Phounias only will give him check, for he likes not water.”

The sun had set; it was moonlight when we



reached the topmost level, — the plain of the dead. My horse neighed shrilly; Gorgo reined back with a scream, half-uttered. For just before us an armoured horseman sat motionless, his pale plates glinting amid the moonbeams.



## XXV.

### *That Lysander*

“**I**T is a risen ghost!” She breathed it with the whisper of a creeping wind. “He has come from beneath those stones.” She pointed numbly toward a glimmering mound. “It is that Othryadas — he died here once — on his sword, for Sparta’s laws, so long ago. He forbids us, Theramnas — forbids the way to Athens.”

I was eying the spectre closely, — both the horse and the shape that was on it. “If it be ghost,” I said, aloud, “then I think Lysander has eaten an arrow for Golas.”

“Indeed it is Lysander,” she cried, “and that is worse.”

I loosened my knife. “If it be Lysander living, a ghost in truth shall rise in this place at our parting.”

“Have you so good a spear?” It came in broad Dorian out of the moonlit brass.

“You shall not fight,” pleaded Gorgo. “We may circle and pass; his horse is not like these. To fight is to lose all, Theramnas. Save me, and do not fight.”

“Now that is wise tactics,” I muttered. “We



will charge and swerve sharply, like cavalry conveying booty past the foe." I lifted my voice. "I have with me no spear at this time," I called back, "but yours, Spartan, is much too short. You will need the Macedonian sarissa if you think to touch us."

His lance clanked on the ground; he raised a Cretan bow. "It is not the weapon of my choice," he said, "but it reaches somewhat further. Stir a hoof, and I shoot: it is Gorgo's horse that falls. Then, Athenian thief, you may spur alone into which ambush you will. Or remain, if you like that better, and we will fight here with even tools."

"We must venture it," murmured Gorgo. "He may miss; and at least it can be no worse. Listen! was that a harp?"

The strained bow flew in fragments from his grasp. Again that harp-note — the charger fell beneath him and lay still. Golas panted beside me. "Kill horse," he gasped — "Man too?" He gazed in my face for a sign.

"The man too:" I pointed to Lysander, just rising from the ground. So near was he to death — Lysander.

"No," screamed Gorgo. "You shall not *kill* Lysander."

And with that word the walls of Athens fell, though to the eye still firm. For the slave's bow dropped with string half-drawn.

"Gork' — helot," he said, and looked at me stolidly. "Ookook — not kill."



I smiled, rather grimly. "At least you shall trim his casque with feathers, Golas. That, I trust, the goddess Gorka will permit."

"Yes," she said, "but not to kill or terribly maim. But he may hear that bow, as I heard it. I think Lysander too should hear that sound."

"Shoot," I commanded, "as when you made sport at Catana. Stand fast there, you that would cripple horses, for the launched shaft swerves not."

The great barbarian bow pealed out with savage glee: it shook and roared with Thracian laughter. The mocking shafts flew unseen, but fiery sparkles danced about the Spartan's bitten crest, and his face was whiter than the moonlight. The feathers brushed his cheek and sneered in his ear; once only he flinched. You have heard of the scar on Lysander's brow: it was so that he got it.

"Gods! Have done, and make an end."

I stilled the bow; it droned with a disappointed whine. "Do you yield yourself?" I called.

"No," he answered. "I am Spartan. But be at least a Greek. Try me no more with Medish torments."

There was little pity in my heart, but I admired the man. And Golas was Gorka's helot now; he would not strike home. "Will you swear to an honest truce?" I asked, — "such as Sparta swore with Argos on this very spot?"

"Aye: for I cannot choose. I will swear by any god with any curse."

"Cast down your knife, then, and come near.



Stand ready, Golas; and if I call again, look not at Gorka."

He grunted as of old. His blood was hot with the shooting. But she —

"Do not trust any oath of Lysander," she cried; "he regards no oath, Theramnas."

"Is it so?" I asked him. He looked at Gorgo. "I do not lie for sport," he said. "Oaths — they are bugbears for boys: at two cubits, Mormo; at four, Apollo and his shrine. They may have served my uses, but will no longer."

"And since they are useless?"

"Shoot," he cried, impatiently, "but split the heart."

"Yet there is always one." I studied his proud, hard face. "Swear by the fortunes of Lysander," I said, suddenly. He blenched.

Then Gorgo clapped her hands. "It is that! it is surely that! You are wonderful, boy — for how could you know? I myself did not know."

"I will not swear it."

"As you like: but this is the wisdom of a bull."

"I would pledge to fight you fairly, — the victor to bear away his prize unhindered. But the arrow that burst my bow has pierced my hand." He raised it; the blood was trickling from his finger-tips, but we had not noticed.

He staunched the gushing wound with thumb and finger. "If I should fight you with one hand," he continued, "would Gorgo hold back the Parthian when I bore you down?"



"No," she cried. "I would not. If one must die, it is you, Lysander. Unless you will swear, he may shoot."

The Spartan scowled. "What terms?" he asked.

"That you put no further hindrance in Gorgo's path or mine, in word or deed, but leave us to our will."

"There must be some limit," he growled. "I will not swear to the ends of time and space. But this I offer. In thirty months my age will be thirty years; and that is the age of marriage for a Spartan of the mess-table. Thirty months I will swear to — but no more."

"It is enough," I said. He laid his right hand in mine and swore by the fortunes of Lysander.

"But take note," he said, "I swear for none but myself."

"In word or deed," I repeated.

"Word or deed — for thirty months I hinder not, but leave you to your fate. For by fate I have sworn, the one god of power, in whose hand the rest are a jiggling chorus of puppets. And perhaps I think not all so ill of you, Athenian, as once I did. If not Lysander, then let it be the son of Hagnon; for our fates have crossed, and his that can scar me thus has at least some edge of temper. We must all pay fortune's forfeit somewhere; and if at last I choose to fling away this ruby gem, may no fish of the sea bring it back to me. But you too" — and his gashed brow knotted till it bled afresh — "you too shall pay your fated



forfeit. If fortune indeed shall grant it to you to bear the daughter of Brasidas to Athens, and there to wed Lysander's chosen bride, to me she shall grant it to set my spears on your very Acropolis. Now, victor, ride forth with your prize where you deem that the way lies open, and in thirty months reach Athens if you may."

We galloped on, with echoing hoof-beats. As we passed the crest I looked back: Lysander followed slowly, with trailing spear; between us, far more swiftly, ran the crouching shadow that was Golas. The moon was at zenith when we reached the verge of that rugged steep I so well remembered. Ten years ago I had climbed it with bated breath — on my way to Gorgo. And now —

As our horses braced their hoofs down the slope, a din of voices broke from the thickets. Darts whistled and clattered about us; the steed of Gorgo plunged downward like a loosened boulder, and was lost in the gloom. With clenched spurs and the leaps of a squirrel I bolted after, — and but for the lifting finger of some god, I know not how any charger's sinews could have borne that strain. We slid in foaming sluices on the polished rock; we ran down ladders of knotted root; and still from each wild bound we rose with the heave of a foundering ship, till the sudden level almost smote in our faces. We recoiled reeling, as from a reef. My steed stood shuddering; the hot blood surged in my veins with a rumble like Phounias, and the moonlight grew dim. Yet I knew the rude wall that overhung the



way, — the nest of a Spartan garrison; while across the track before me lay a bar of shields, with linking edges, picketed with pikes. These wavered mistily, but one shape rose clear. Gorgo! She shone above them like a painted Iris limned in lucent wax, — her throne foam-filleted now, herself adroop, as a rose too roughly handled.

“Do you yield?” a hoarse voice shouted.

“You must yield, Theramnas,” a sweeter voice called, faintly.

But they led her behind the wall; they would not let me speak to her. And yet, “Oh, Theramnas! you will find a way, Theramnas,” she cried, as they dragged her through the gate. It clanged and grated.

Me they pulled from my horse. I lay on the spot where I fell, giddy and shaking with weariness, weak as a figure piled of sand.

“Is it ransom or the sword?” The harsh tone entered my ear, but I could not speak.

“Neither!” I saw only a blur, but knew that Lysander had dragged his spear within the circle. “Neither, Clearchus. You will presently set him on his horse and let him go. Or will this be deemed an interference, Hagnon’s son?” he asked, bending over me. And still I could not answer.

“I think it will be within my oath. He who scars Lysander and leaps the precipice unscathed shall not be carved like a bullock in the dust. As for the ransom, it is yonder.” He pointed toward the wall.



“But the Ephors?” The man spoke sourly.

“Do the thing I tell you. I will answer the Ephors. Give him wine.”

“My rule is strict,” grumbled the phylarch.

“Mine is stricter. Would you defy me, beater of helots? You exceed your office.”

“I hold by the Ephors.”

“When it suits your crabbed humour — rarely else. The Ephors change, — but not Lysander. Is not the king’s own brother my backer? Shall I tell a tale of lawless raids, or lie for you, Clearchus? Will you have a better command, or a worse?”

“I would go to Asia with Astyochus. The Ephors will there be remote. Truth, I like not their meddling. I would lead a file.”

“You have it.”

“And you have this.” He thrust at me with his foot, but Lysander jammed it with the pike.

The wine revived me; I sat up. Lysander leaned upon his spear above me. “She will be safe enough,” he said, “for thirty months. I have sworn the one oath; win if you may; I shall not trouble her. I will also deal with the others; they shall not greatly vex her.”

“It is more than the oath. I shame that I doubted you.”

“You doubted well, son of Hagnon. But that is past. Hereafter we will deal with open words and open weapons.”

“But what of Golas? I would grieve to lose my slave.”



He laughed — but the laugh was cold. “I too have grieved for him — if it be that fiend of the bow that you speak of. No Heracles ever shot such shafts. I left him above, by the ambush, treating at double thong-cast with those helots. No dart will prick his hide, I think, while his arrows last. But I make no truce for the Parthian.”

I rode forth with the morning; but there was now no morning in my heart. Even Golas, it seemed — but as I rounded a jutting crag he stood before me. I almost took him in my arms.

“How did you pass the Spartan line,” I asked, — “the men in full brass, Golas?”

He shook his empty quiver. He lifted up both hands, then a single finger.

And I thought, — “If that deadly quiver were not empty, I would even now turn back.”



## XXVI.

### *Meletus before the Senate*

I FOUND Meletus in the wine-shop kept by the Chalcidian. I knew I should find him there, for the wine of the place had the proper tang of resin that he loved.

I felt uneasy about the letter. So much was at stake. That, first, must be attended to. I did not even wait to go to my father's house, but entered Piræus by the Marsh-gate and rode quickly through the streets without once dismounting. I perceived, however, that something quite out of the common was in the air. Everybody was talking; men slapped each other on the back and roared with laughter. I had rarely seen the city in such good humour.

When I reached the wine-shop, the Chalcidian seemed strangely reticent. He assumed an air of mystery; at first he would tell me nothing of Meletus. But finally, when I mentioned my name and explained the urgency of my errand, he led me to an inner room and flung open the door.

Meletus was sitting upon a stool, propping himself against the wall. His condition was somewhat advanced. He sprang to his feet with a til-



ler-stick and a volley of oaths, but knew me instantly.

“Is it you, lad? Then I will sit, for this deck is right unsteady and grows worse as the wind rises; it is only by deep drink that I can hold my footing.” He lurched back on the stool and sat with legs wide spread. “Buckle down the hatches again,” he roared at the Chalcidian, — “but first fetch in a fresh flagon of the vintage.”

His face was rich violet and his tones rather raucous, but otherwise his speech flowed on much as usual. His look was singularly sheepish.

“I will bear no more messages of state, lad, — neither for you nor for Nicias. It is not a pilot’s business.”

“I fear it is not, indeed. What have you done? What drunken folly now?”

“I had in scarce half a flagon; my wits were at their keenest. I told them it was an allegory, like Homer — a sort of oracle, mind you — a writing after the manner of Orpheus, as it were — what you might call an enigma. But they would not have it so. One old fellow asked me to recite it to the lyre. I had forgot that those cursed things go jigging.”

“Are you talking about the letter?”

“What else? In my view of it Nicias was drunk at the writing of it, and no better than the rest of us, either. It was all about some bedizened hetæra, with more or less mention of you. Those things, no doubt, are all well enough at odd times, but in my way of thinking they should have no place in a



letter of state. They become a source of trouble to such as bear official messages." He looked deeply aggrieved.

"Shrine of Apollo! Do you mean that you opened the letter of Nicias and attempted to expound it yourself with the wisdom of half a flagon?"

"It was already open, lad. And as to expounding, mind you, I had no choice. They had me before the full senate to expound the matter, — and I would sooner have expounded Scylla and Charybdis, but I did my best, lad. Yet they laughed at me, as if Meletus were some sort of a fool. I mind not your laughing, lad, for you laugh mainly at the wit of things; but it runs in my mind it was me they were laughing at."

"The Harpies snatch you and your expositions! You have somehow made them merry over a very grave affair. If not you, what fool read the letter?"

"I could never unwind such a twisted tangle of little lines. I think it was that kind of lister of the cargo they call a secretary that read it. First he read, and they stared; then he read, and they roared; then they had up Meletus. At the last I counseled them to bear it to Delphi — which I hold was a shrewd turn. I had no wish to speak my thought of Nicias — for it is a mischance that might come to any — nor yet to reflect on you, lad. So I bade them go to Delphi, where the god would



doubtless be discreet and might render them some prophecy of value."

"Was there, then, so much about me? I did not expect it, Meletus."

"Aye, lad. Considerable, I would say — though not always in terms of the plainest — and the less about Nicias himself. It is not often a man is so modest in his drink."

"Nicias, then, was kind. I have misjudged the man."

"I would think it likely. But a thought too kind, as 'twere, in places. Yet in my interpretation, lad, I ever gave it the better turn, as being in the way of a parable of your good services."

"There was but little, then, about Nicias?"

"Less than little, lad — unless it might be by a sort of implication."

"And of Lamachus?"

"Not a syllable. But it is likely he was jealous."

"Did he not entreat to be relieved? Was there no call for aid?"

"I would say there was some matter of that character. But what cast me off my course was this, — to the best of my judgment it must needs mean help for Syracuse. 'She' would most likely enigmatise a city — would it not be so, think you, enigmatically spoken?"

"You are crazy. Or some enemy has changed the tablet. It was opened, you say?"

"Split wide. There was also mention of one Lysander, which I took to signify the army before



Syracuse. But it may be as you surmise. It has wrought like the work of an enemy. They were some of them minded to lay me in chains against your coming; but that I avoided with some cleverness, passing out quite suddenly."

"Quick, Meletus! What was that tablet like? and where did you find it?"

"On your pallet, lad, even as you told me. I cannot read those keel tracks, as I have once owned to you; yet I thought it a strange affair of a letter, with the marks tattooed, as it were, in the wood. But I know not the customary form of a document of state."

"Meletus, you have made a blunder past belief. I would not have had this thing happen for twenty talents. I shall be the laughing-stock of all Athens."

"Meletus, too, lad: I mean myself. And I think I had the longer oar and the shorter cramp of the handle. But it is true, lad: we have met a certain accession of reputation. I cannot pass the street but they follow me, as it were, with hymns of praise, as if I were a new divinity — me that am ever careless of worship. But it is fame, lad, and that all men seek. Yet I think it were as well to make back soon for Syracuse, for the draught may stale on our palates. Now tell me, lad, what manner of thing was it that has raised us to this height?"

"It was hers, Meletus — my own love's letter. And you, with wine-wise leers and a swelling swagger, have laid it before the senate — with an exposi-



tion! I shall slay myself for very shame. And she — I am almost glad she is still in Sparta.”

He whistled until I heard the passers-by halting in the street. “But, lad, I think you were deceived. I have heard nothing like it, — and I am no priest of Cybebe, mind you. You were deceived, and therefore sped not. It is the true Orphic; there is the very ring of Bacis in it. Now mark” — and he waved an unsteady finger. “That much mention of a certain symbol set forth in the figure of Gorgo, which as I receive it implies a manner of turning into stone, — that might well express this same Nicias —”

“Silence! Is it not enough that you spoke these things before the senate?”

“Who by the turning of stones —”

“I will hear no more of it,” I cried, and fled from the chamber.

“You will hear much more of it, lad,” he belowed after me, “but from such as interpret with no gentleness or judgment.”

I did hear much of it. For a space of days I was the jest of the market, the mirth of every banquet. Yet it passed — like all else after a little — and I was but the better liked and better known for this. Alas! no jest is a jest to the gods, — unless all be a jest. Even here they were shaping the city’s doom: out of comedy came tragedy.

I went to the ship, where it lay in the dock; I found the letter of Nicias deep in my pallet. I laid it before the senate; it was read to the people in



full assembly. A pathetic thing it was to hear, — that cry of Nicias out of his waning camp in the marshes. But they only laughed and called back, — “That other was better, Gorgon hunter. Read that, and let the pilot expound it for us.” And Meletus hooded his face and hid in a harness-shop.

“I thought them the less likely to seek me in that place,” he explained, afterward. “But the flat leather cordage hung all about me, and I know not but I had a sort of curbing rope on me. Do you know lad, — I whinnowed over my wine that night!”

I was true to my promise. I pleaded for Nicias, and yet more I pleaded for the army; but say what I would, I could not make them take me seriously. “You are too impatient, Gorgon queller,” they cried. “You shall back to Syracuse; and when that is taken, Sparta shall give you this Gorgon as part of the price of peace.” Their spirits ran so high that even the disappointment of their hopes could not daunt them. Nicias they would not recall, nor the army; but they voted a second armament as great as the first, naming Demosthenes to lead the hoplites and Eurymedon for the ships. Again the city rang with preparation.

“It is indeed all or nothing, now,” I said to my father. “Would that they had recalled Nicias! Would that they had never banished Alcibiades!”



He answered only with the words of Theognis:—

He whose soul wishes weal oft is a means of abasement,  
Whiles who had wrought to do bale proves but a craftsman of  
weal.

“Do you mean Nicias and Alcibiades?”

“Nicias is a good man, devout and prudent. I have great confidence in Nicias, my son. Of Alcibiades I expect no good. I have never trusted him—the traitor!”

This answer puzzled me somewhat. If so he meant it, my father had uttered an oracle in those lines he recited,—an oracle it proved; yet whether the wisdom on his lips was from the heart I cannot say. There are times when the gods play strange tricks with the tongue.

Of Gorgo I somehow could not talk to my father. Much less to others; it would have been to invite a jeer. I had been assigned to Eurymedon, who was to sail with ten picked triremes in advance of the main fleet, bearing money and instructions. I was kept very busy; I felt, too, that I was watched. Still, Gorgo was ever in my thoughts. Of the thirty months one had already passed; could I spare four more for Syracuse? For three or four, I thought, would surely make or mar in Sicily,—and then I would be free to win or die in Sparta. My oath to Nicias troubled me; already I had played with it. There was but one man in Athens with whom I could debate this thing or who could in any way help me. To him at last I went—to Socrates.



It was early morning. I found him sitting beside his own door, a child upon his knee. A querulous voice from within called it. "Go, little son," he said, "to your mother; and see that you do as she bids." The child went slowly, looking back; a gaunt arm reached out and seized it.

I almost turned away. How could a man such as this advise the lover of Gorgo? But the tranquil strength of his soul reached out and drew me to him as surely as that other had dragged in the child; and while the harsh voice behind the wall rated the wailing babe, I stood before Socrates and told him all my trouble.

"Let us walk together," he said. "These noises jar upon the thoughts. And I suppose that you wish to reason of this matter and decide it according to reason; for otherwise you would not have come to me."

"Socrates" — I could not forbear the question as we passed from the strident clamour of his door — "Socrates, did the spirit never warn you of this trouble?"

"In that alone," he said, "I did not heed the voice. I bear the penalty with such patience as I may. She loves me, after her fashion, and the children." His face clouded for a moment as he spoke of the children; but quickly, "I am a great trial to Xanthippe," he continued, smiling. "But, indeed, all things are a trial to her. Enough of that. She cannot make her peace with the gods of little things."



"Socrates," I cried, "does the spirit forbid me Gorgo?" And I held my breath.

"The voice forbids not Gorgo," he said, slowly. I sighed like a diver as he rises from his plunge. Yet I had noted a certain accent in that answer, as of surprise.

"You yourself would not have said it, Socrates?"

"The spirit is the wiser. Let us obey the spirit."

"The spirit is greater than Delphi. Yet I would not have obeyed."

"You would still have fulfilled your fate, Theramenes."

"What is my fate?"

"I know not. The voice speaks nothing of that. But this I may say to you: your soul is ever better than your thought; your death is better than your life."

"It is a hard word, Socrates."

"And your life shall be better than your fame."

"That is an evil word — a cruel word." For in that moment I felt the pang of an age-long contumely — the brand of a lying record ever burning on my brow. "I will not fulfil this fate. I will go to my death in Sparta — it shall not find me in Athens, as once you said. To Syracuse I will not go. What matters it of an oath when fame is lost?"

"Your fate will be fulfilled, and I myself shall live to see it, though soon to follow by the same hard-beaten path."

"The hemlock! You, too, Socrates?"



"The hemlock. Do you think to avoid it? Do you think to find your Gorgo on the road of a broken oath? Your fate will be fulfilled — and mine. But the soul we might slay."

"For Gorgo I will do anything."

"Then for Gorgo keep your oath. Wait, and all things shall come to you."

"I must sail? past the prison of Gorgo?"

"The thirty months shall not have passed before you see her face."

"Is it the voice?"

"The voice."

"I will sail back to the marshes."

"And dally not again by the way. The gods will not bless a broken oath; have you not already tried it?"

At the corner of the market I met Meletus. A mob of boys was about him, and one, who had brought a papyrus of Homer from his school, was asking if the tale of Thersites had any reference to Syracuse. "It might chance that the symbol Odysseus enigmatises Meletus," roared the pilot, and swung his stick. But as I approached, he flung them off and strode toward me.

"Lad," he cried, "I have the news. We sail to-morrow where I trust it may be permitted to walk without an escort. By the bones of all that have met a good death by drowning, I am weary of this hero-worship. But," he added, "you shall deliver the letters of state. I will none of it: I would sooner ride a horse."



## XXVII.

### *The Beginning of the End*

THE voyage was ended. Sparta, with its lure of love and death, lay far behind. The grotto of Gorgo had been passed without a sign. The great Sicilian city mounted up before us until we saw the rolling waves break white beneath its seawall. Beyond, a new castle sat on the heights, far up the slope, and from this ran down a line of wall, with many angles and thrice with clustered turrets, until at length it met the city's bar of buttressed masonry below.

"Nicias will have no more use for his ballast-stones laid in tar," remarked Meletus.

"No," I said, "our eagle now nests in the swamp."

"Eagle, say you! the bird is an owl, and I would counsel it to hunt by night according to its nature."

I turned in some astonishment. "Meletus, there is surely wit in wine. It is shrewd advice."

"Any good pilot," he answered, rather pompously, "could steer an army if they would give him the sweeps. It is much the same: you must never be so unhandy as to strike bows on and burst



your beak; the trick is to double and swing in on them."

We dropped our sail and rode between the giant's nipping thumb and finger at the harbour's entrance, into the hollow of his grasp. He had us fast now, but as yet none guessed it.

Most of our ships were lying in the shallows close to the camp; to reach them we steered through a palisade of stout pickets planted in the mud. This gave me a shock: when before had the ships of Athens, with water under them, needed other pickets than their own sharp prows? Meletus, too, noted it; but his glance swung round the harbour.

"Old Nicias is a hindersome creature," he said, "better at ballasting than making seaway. But here he reefs up with some sense of the weather. Who could rightly order a sea-fight in this mixing-bowl?"

He looked toward the city. There, too, the water lapped on a palisade of sunken logs, behind which was gathered an array of ships that seemed still greater than our own. "Corinthians mostly," he commented. "Too thick in the snout for grace or speed, and heavy on the sweeps, — but had I the handling of them it should go hard with us, lad, in this hole. Their main lack is of a sufficient pilot, lad."

"I heard at Corcyra that they have now one Ariston."

"Ariston of Corinth? Then shall Nicias see good sport, lad. That man is a very artist of the craft, though his boats are but logs. This is better than



wine. I will run in upon him with such an exposition of devices for cramped encounter as shall burst his ribs with some profit to his skill, — unless he should lack due leisure through bodily mischance. But I trust he swims well, for I would shame to leave so worthy a pilot bobbing in no depth of water. Lad, it is twice the pleasure to apply the art to a receptive judgment.” And Meletus alone was merry in all the camp.

Within a few days of our arrival a great disaster befell. The Syracusans sailed with all their fleet to the mouth of the harbour, — to close it, we feared, and went against them with fewer ships. At the first we were hard pressed, and the soldiers in our fortress on the headland thronged to the water-front and cheered us with cries. For this Gylippus had waited. Three thousand ambushed hoplites rushed upon our undefended wall, and it was ours no more. The men, indeed, escaped, fleeing in boats through the thick of the sea-fight, which at this very moment turned in our favour. The enemy’s craft, ill-steered, fell foul, and Meletus, with others of his kind, darted among them making havoc: eleven they took or sunk. But though we still maintained our access to the sea, our convoys passed in peril bringing scanty corn. The giant’s grip had tightened and we felt its pinch.

Of all our fighting on and in and round about those accursed waters I shall not attempt to tell; something there was each day. But of our assault on the line of piles which shielded their inner harbour,



almost under the city's walls, of that I must speak, for it was out of the common. And as this was a matter of enginery, Nicias, of course, was the planner.

He had received the letters from Athens with little comment; though disappointed he seemed not at all surprised. "The responsibility will at least be divided now," he said, "and with such an armament, if we may not take the city we may at least withdraw with safety and credit. May the Holy Goddess of the Mysteries grant that we go not to her before this aid arrives! But was there no word of withdrawal, under certain conditions and after a season?"

"Not a syllable," I told him. "They account Syracuse as taken. If it comes to withdrawal, you yourself must make the order, Nicias."

"I will take no chances of the hemlock. Better to die in this swamp."

"But the army? and Athens?"

"It lies in the lap of the gods," he answered. "I shall do my duty and obey to the very letter."

But his health seemed much improved, and his mind was full of new schemes of enginery. He procured a merchant vessel of heaviest burden, and fitted it with cranes and turrets.

"Give me of your best bows," he said, "for the summits. Below I will have darters. Slingers I cannot use for lack of space to swing the cord."

"Does he think to grub for sunken treasure?" grumbled Meletus. Yet he undertook the steering



of this floating fortress without much protest; and the thing worked beyond expectation.

As we swung down toward the piles the Syracusans came out against us in small boats, with which they almost paved the water. But they did not press close, — they scarcely reached the fringe of our falling missiles; for Golas, whom I had placed on the highest top, ever smote the foremost till none dared invite his shaft. Some of their lesser craft he even sunk, shooting high in air and striking through the bottoms with falling arrows. Meanwhile our cranes were busy plucking up the logs. Some were stubborn, but our divers plunged in boldly and sawed them off beneath the water; we did not stop till all were out. Yet but for Meletus we should have missed some of them. As we were moving off he swung suddenly.

“See that swirl,” he cried. “Those Sicilian otters have been setting snags to rip good bottoms under the water-line.” And he swore by the rivers of hell.

We turned back. These, too, we sawed off, Meletus pointing out each one. Yet little came of it. A cow that was opened lacked liver, — and so did Nicias; he would not strike. Syracuse was not idle, and soon the low swell foamed on a new barrier of piles.

“What are they doing over yonder?” I asked Meletus one day.

“They have caught the trick of Nicias now,” he growled. “As well as I can descry it, lad, at long



eye-cast, they are turning good ships into bunting-engines, — the sort of thing you use to ram a gate. They have braced their cat-heads and brought them to fore, after a manner of bull's horns; I would surmise they are thinking to meet us with bull's tactics. It is a coarse device, lad, but it suits the cast of the coast. It is likely to be the contrivance of that same Ariston, who slipped me with a foul turn in the coil by yonder gut, where those fellows rubbed off their own fins by sheer misdirection. Three times I was cramped between shorn hulks," he added, disgustedly. "You cannot count on them; the running of such raw pilots would puzzle Poseidon."

Again Meletus was right. Indeed, the enemy presently became so bold with their new equipment that they drew out and dared us before our own enclosure. That we could not take tamely. We led against them, though Gylippus was giving Nicias hot work along the walls behind. All that day we held them in check, but with little result, for they stood together too close for a circuit and would only meet us full on the bow.

After supper Meletus, who had drunk less heavily than his wont, rose up and demanded that I lead him to Nicias. I could not doubt that he had his reasons, but I did the thing reluctantly. The general started up from before his silver shrine and faced us.

"Nicias, lad," began Meletus — but stopped sud-



denly. "The god's fire-fork, but I am off my bearings," he said, hoarsely.

Nicias scowled. "Is this a season for unseemly jesting?" His eyes were fixed on me. "But this is what comes of our mistaken policy of turning honest citizen hoplites into blasphemous sailors. We may thank Pericles for this."

"The god's fire-fork!" broke in Meletus, "in my view of it he could never make a pilot of a hoplite. It is the sort they have over yonder. But now they have taken counsel of a pilot of the craft, — and, you see, they are even tossing their horns in our faces. And I thought, 'Our old Nicias here is a sufficient land-pilot, mind you, but he, too, in these matters of shipping, might well take counsel with a master of the craft.' So I cast down the flagon I was sipping at, and steered a straight course."

"Sir," I said, "he is rough, but he knows his business. He has some word."

"That's it, sir. Meletus knows his business and has a good word for old Nicias. And I thought, it being after the manner of his enginery, he may well grasp it. I think they are minded to bunt us."

"I fear it," said Nicias.

"They will bunt hard now. It is in my thought they may bunt us clean off the harbour, for this pond gives no seaway, and their bows are too stiff for our beaks. Now in case we should be pressed back behind the stocks — in some dismay, it might happen, and ill trim to fight further in no space at



all — what hinders them to follow in and make splinters of us? ”

“ It is well thought of.”

“ In my manner of thinking a landsman should ever counsel with some sufficient pilot. Now this is the way of it. There is a thing called a dolphin, made of lead beaked with iron; it is swung from a spar, and may be dropped through deck and bottom if any come too near. The lubberly merchants use it against pirates. It is unseamanly, but suits here. Let certain of these dolphins be set on grain-barges and moored close by the openings. If it needs we shall pass through to safety, while of those who follow you will see some snared and the rest will turn. And I thought, as being a manner of enginery — ”

“ You shall see to the mounting of them to-morrow. Are you not that Meletus who steered this youth to Athens, and lately discovered the hidden piles? ”

“ The very man,” I cried, “ but his modesty kept it back.”

“ Now by the god’s — ”

“ Say not that thing again,” exclaimed Nicias.

“ Well — it indeed lacks the needful variety — but may the fires of Phlegethon roll down my throat if ever I was thus accused, even at Athens, where babes unborn leap with fear at mention of charges. It is but a land fashion in my view of it, this pride of modesty. On the sea we brag in plain, set terms, as you shall hear me when I have rightly nipped



that Ariston. But the snags I had merely forgot. It is no special matter for a pilot to mark the meaning of a riddle, and I would account the main credit to them that dived."

"I find the son of Hagnon right in his rating of you," said Nicias. "But curb your tongue, Meletus, and deal lightly with the flagon."

"Yet it was out of the flagon that I had it," he muttered, as we left the tent. "It slipped from my hand; then I thought of those dolphins. And as for the fire-fork, it has been on my tongue devils often and no harm of it."

The next day was wholly spent in preparation on both sides of the bay; but the morning after saw their full fleet ranged against us, while Gylippus pressed on our wall with redoubled din. Yet at first it was just as before: as long as the shadows fell inland both fleets held aloof like cautious boxers; and when at last they pointed toward the city with short, black fingers, the enemy drew away to their harbour. We also landed and made ready for dinner.

"The sun was too hot for them to-day," remarked Meletus, draining a huge flagon. "They have been soon satisfied, but I am the more content." He flung down the empty leather with a roar. "Fires of Phlegethon, they are at us again! They have had their meat by the sea; it is the very trick of that Ariston."

We rushed back to our boats, unfed; with fierce haste we manned them and led out, yet in time.



Again the combat hung; the shadows drifted seaward; none would venture.

But the head of Meletus hummed with wine, and his stomach grew impatient; his ship swung back and forth with reversing oars. A wind had arisen; the line before us swayed, and some of the prows were flung far forward. The pilot could resist no longer. His cry to the oars rang out; the spruce bent like a bow, the beak shot forth like the arrow: before any could hinder he had cleft the nearest galley just behind the cat-head. Others rushed upon him; he reversed, drew back, reversed again, and cut the foremost through the side. The battle was on.

Would that Meletus might have stood at every helm! but such skill as his was rare even on Athenian decks. The heavy-headed galleys thronged upon our line, driven by tug of oar and drift of wind; it was like the rush of a drove of boars upon herdsmen armed with light javelins. Their hard tusks thrust us back with cruel gorings: beaks bent and broke away; our very prows were crushed; few ships were sunk, but all our fleet was crippled. We fled behind our pickets, hotly chased, — Meletus last, steering with a loose oar snatched from the upper bank, and smearing the air with curses. He passed the gap, the enemy close upon his stern: "Let loose!" he yelled. The spar creaked and sprung; the huge dolphin dived to the bottom through splintering timbers and shrieking crew. Another dolphin crashed; the Syracusans



swam like rats, but none escaped. The pursuing herd sheered off with much clashing of horns; Meletus would still have made out at them, but none would follow. He strode his battered deck in a rage which not even the rivers of hell could assuage, though he called on them.

"He pinched me — that Ariston," he foamed. "That son of Pyrrichus by the night hag nipped off both my sweeps. My beak was fouled in one of their barges, and another had jammed me. It lacked little that son of a shark had swallowed me whole, but we wrenched free with push-poles and drove through." He paused to speak of Phlegethon and Styx.

"Well?" I said. For my station had been by the dolphins at his own request, and I had seen but a part.

"Well, is it? And that expresses the shortness of your wit. In my thinking it lacked little of ill. For there was Meletus behind them, with staved bows and tailless sweeps and broken banks, and that eater of wood prodding at the stern-post. Twice I evaded the ripping of his tusks with close rubs and further loss of oars. I steered through with this deck-swab." And he cast down the oar. "I had hope he would take the dolphin, but he left that to the heady fools. I will brace my bows for the ramming of stone-barges. I will split his bull's head through the very teeth. He shall swim for it yet — the Corinthian carpenter!"

But the camp was pale with dismay. We had



suffered defeat on the sea; the talk was all of flight; even Nicias wavered. Whatever the course we chose, our broken bows must be mended; so we rose with the dawn and toiled all day with hammer and axe, while the ships of Syracuse hovered at the mouth of the bay.

I viewed them uneasily. "Can it be their thought to bar us from the sea?" And then first I was frightened.

"I would credit them with it," answered Meletus, glancing up from the timber he was shaping. "They are guided now by a pilot, lad. It will be most like that slave of a blacksmith to seek to chain the gut." He dropped his adze and gazed intently. "There are sea-eagles on the wing, lad. The gulls are scattering."

So it seemed. The Syracusan craft were hurrying toward the inner port. Soon the pennant of Athens fluttered between the battlemented promontories; her pæan sounded across the bay. A mighty phalanx of ships was marching in, with oars that stepped true to the pipes and a brazen gleam from the crowded decks. Five abreast they came, and their column was fifteen deep.

My fear breathed away in a sigh. "We shall yet win Syracuse."

"And I will yet sink that Ariston," responded Meletus.



## XXVIII.

### *The Great Disaster*

**T**HEN it was that Demosthenes planned the night attack. The coming of this man had cheered us more than the force he brought. His presence was like a fresh wind from the sea blowing over the marshes; again we felt the thrill of true leadership.

The Syracusans raided on the plain no longer. Gylippus lay close behind his own walls now, and our dinted fence had peace. The harbour, too, was ours, to the very pickets of the inner port, and the sea beyond was again but part of the flowing mantle of Attica. Yet while the fortress of the Spartan stood on the shoulder of the heights, and convoys of grain and arms, and troops of new allies still passed by the winding wall down to the city, Syracuse could never be taken; its siege was not begun.

The night attack was bitterly opposed by Nicias: the plan was too bold, the hazard too great.

“Shall we waste again the prestige and the terror of our coming?” pleaded Demosthenes. “Shall we lie in the swamp with rotting planks and a rotting army till the rank fogs and the gods’ impatience of sluggards do the work of Syracuse?”



Then Nicias, at mention of the gods, began a homily. They had never favoured our project; they would still cast down our hope. But there were other voices now: he was overruled.

“Have a care,” said Eurymedon, “lest we think you loath to let another win and hold the prize that Nicias won and lost.”

“That Nicias won!” interrupted Menander. “It was Lamachus rather that won it, and this son of Hagnon with his devil archer. Nicias here but piled the stone.”

I begged of Demosthenes a place in the ranks, — quickly granted. I put on the full armour of a hoplite and buckled up my heavy shield; I chose for use a square-headed pike, not likely to bend at the point. The moon rode high at our starting, but had sunk far down the sky before we reached the pass; for we made a wide circuit.

Strict even to death was the order of silence: a faint crisping of armour and a low thud of buskined feet could alone be heard. We climbed the narrow defile, deep in shadow; we found the stockade unwatched, and our mechanics — for a train of them attended — cut through with saws dipped in oil. We stood by the fortress gate; there was still no alarm. We rammed with an olive trunk and burst in; the guard sprang to arms with loud cries, but made no stand. Some we slew, but many fled down the line of wall spreading panic; the clash of brass swelled from below.

“On!” shouted our leader. “Lose not a mo-



ment." And we charged down the hill. They still fled before us. We took the first turreted camp with little resistance. Our workmen were already pulling down the wall behind.

A Dorian pæan sounded in our front; another rang out in our rear. We halted in blank dismay, — I, too, flinched with the rest; our whole line was disordered and wavering.

"On!" called Menander, out of the glimmer. "The Argives — it is but the cry of our own Argives behind."

We rallied and again plunged forward. Before us tossed a lake of glinting shields — a broad lake it seemed in the moonlight. Gylippus himself was leading up against us; yet we routed him — even Gylippus — and followed the clanging fugitives with unabated, breathless pace. Few were overtaken: but a new pæan swelled on the slope, and as we turned an angle a dense phalanx of Theban hoplites rippled moonlight full in our faces.

We paused for a better formation, yet charged them with but a fraction of our strength. There was the reef on which our fortune broke at last; for they met us like some dark, deep-rooted reef over whose sullen rocks the water sparkles. Their dogged Boeotian pikes thrust us back; my shield I left impaled; we turned in dismay, clashing with the tide that pressed behind us: the long line heaved with panic.

All was lost. We strove to rally in vain. We ran this way and that in aimless squads, uncertain



of friend or foe; we fell by our own spears. The enemy, too, were in confusion. They had rallied from every side; the hosts were mingled; we heard about us all the dialects of Greece. Our pass-word was shouted until all had it, — and thus it became a snare.

“The word?” I called to a huge spearman on the incline above me. He gave it. “To the front!” I cried, seizing his arm, — and reeled from his blow. A black shadow loomed over me; I seemed to feel a knife across my throat.

As I felt the peal of a bow-string had mingled with the singing in my head. I had lost all track of Golas, but now found myself borne swiftly in his arms. He ran straight for the verge of the cliffs, and when we reached it I had my senses but no strength. A stream of men, wide but thin, was pouring over it; a crashing and moaning rose from below. He scarcely paused, but with one arm for me and another for the rocks, using his bare feet in the fashion of an ape, he swung down by juts and crevices and narrow ledges, safely to the bottom. He laid me over his shoulder as he carried me through the marsh. I looked back; I could see quite clearly, for the sky was reddening and the mist but slight; the flashing stream still poured from the precipice and writhed below. Yet from that souging pool many rose and ran on: some across the flats, like Golas, and these were saved; while others, newly arrived, turning inland to avoid



the marsh — I saw the dust-cloud of the Syracusan horse, and knew the fate of wanderers.

Demosthenes had led his own detachment down the defile and fought his way back to the camp. His spirit was broken; he hoped no more.

“Let us leave this deadly spot while we may,” he said, when the generals met. “I was wrong, perhaps, — but that is past. Athens needs us; a Spartan army sits on the hills of Attica. The ships are ready; the way lies open; let us make no more mistakes.”

But again the counsels of Nicias were uppermost. He had won great credit by his foresight; he almost triumphed in our defeat.

“I warned you of this,” he answered. “And now, because you have failed in one rash venture, will you fling away the success that waits on wiser methods? I tell you, Syracuse is almost spent. I have messages; we have friends within her walls. Wait: you will soon be listening to proposals for surrender. You are newly come and raw in this place. Will you sooner face the assembly of Athens than the enemy? The very soldiers who now clamour for retreat will turn and denounce us.”

“I will sooner die by their voices than betray their lives,” said Demosthenes. But his will was overborne.

We waited: Nicias still had his messages; but the enemy grew more insolent day by day. Once more they ranged themselves before our prows and taunted us until we could refrain no longer. But



the squadron led by Eurymedon was forced upon the shoals; and there, they say, he died, crushed amid his broken timbers. For I was not with him, but fought on the shore among those who beat back the charge of Gylippus. Eighteen ships we lost; the rest we saved by mighty efforts on sea and land, for many were grounded. A second time we were worsted: we — with ships! And neither defeat nor victory brought any respite; the night brought no rest.

Meletus sat in the gloom gnawing a morsel of dried fish. "We are in hard case, lad," he said, sulkily.

"We are."

"Curse their drovers' tactics! I could not reach him; I see no mending of it. And, lad, there is scarce a flagon in all the stores. Meletus is heeding the counsels of old Nicias now, mind you. It was not my thought, but hard luck ever betters discipline, and there is a sort of urgency of persuasion in lacking. Fish — washed down with a flow of the element the creature swims in — I am cold as a fish myself, lad — Phlegethon!"

A red light shone on the water; the camp was in sudden uproar.

"God's fork! they are at us again. That sweep-smashing son of the bellows is blowing fire on the fleet. He would burn what is left of us."

We ran to the shore and leaped into a boat. A fire-ship, crackling with tar and fagots, was bearing down with the wind directly toward the gap.



Other boats were already about it, thrusting back with poles, but the drift was too strong and the heat beyond endurance. Meletus, who had called to his seamen as he ran, made for the nearest barge of dolphins, cut the moorings, manned deck-oars, and swung out. The fire roared close on the bow.

“Steady, there!” he cried.

The long spar trembled in the mounting flames. It blazed; the cordage parted; the heavy missile broke down through fire and keel. The drowning embers hissed, and the red light dimmed in clouds of steam.

“Push off athwart the wind,” he shouted to the boats; and the sagging hulk lay lodged against our piles, still flaming in the upper parts, but harmless.

“There is a certain system about it,” remarked Meletus, fanning his blistered face with a rag of sail. “For every play of action there is a way of counter, — if you know the turn of it, and our old Nicias hinders not. It was no discreditable performance, as I would think, for one called hastily from a fish diet.”

But Meletus, whether he uttered it in jest or earnest, was wrong in that word about better discipline under privation. The camp was almost insurgent: so loud was the call for retreat that Nicias himself at last gave the command, though muttering still of messages; he could never withstand the cry of many voices. Our ships were trimmed for flight, our last stores laid in the hold, and we were to sail with the break of the morning.



The moon was again at full, but seemed strangely dim; there was scarcely a cloud in the sky, yet it waned until it seemed a pallid film.

Meletus laid a cold hand on my shoulder. "It is a portent, lad, if I can read the signs. That moon is dead, and yonder thing is but a sky-ghost, as it were. I have seen them: dead men rise from the ooze after it. Old Nicias had the right of it, lad." He spoke in hoarse tones, and abated of his oaths.

A black blot grew on the edge of the disk, — which passed through all its phases in an hour.

"The time is dying, too, lad. It is already the old and new day of the month — or the ghost of it — and I fear it portends a manner of payment of debts." His voice was hollow, as if he spoke from under the hatches. "I will heed old Nicias henceforth to the end of it."

The moon had left the sky; a moan of fear filled the darkness. True, the stars were there, but they shone with portentous brightness yielding little light, and hung low, as if about to fall.

"It is but natural," I protested, faintly. "Anaxagoras has written of it."

His broad hand shut on my mouth; I thought he would have choked me. "Speak not here of such a spyer upon god's mysteries," he gasped in my ear. "I account him little else but an atheist, lad. It is a perilous profane babble, that book-writing of prying sophists; far worse, by god's fire — and there is what comes of starting ill speeches



out of season," he concluded, angrily. I was almost of the same mind at that moment.

"It is still aloft there," he said, presently, "but in some sort buried, I would say; and that is a sign to us, lad. Its look is most like to a shield that has lain long under brine. It is drowned, lad: there is water up yonder, as you may have heard — a great sea that the dead ships sail on, and when the wind tosses it there is rain."

A thin margin of light appeared, and brightened, until the full moon shone out once more amid the paling stars, and its sheen grew dazzling; yet it brought small comfort.

"The time is stark dead," repeated Meletus. "A month is dead in a night, and I am as ill as dead with the thought. There is nothing done but dying in dead days, lad. We cannot sail; the day is past. It confounds me, lad. I shall hold by old Nicias; he has a nose for the weather signs of things to come, and will take the right meaning of it."

The morning passed; not a ship was moved. All waited for Nicias; and after long consultation with his diviners he came forth alone. For thrice nine days we must hold the camp, he told us: a full circle of the moon must pass without action. "This," he said, "is the manifest will of the gods, and none shall call it in question." And with that he looked toward his colleagues, who stood apart in a dejected group. "There has been too much of debate and too little of devotion in this place, as the god himself has witnessed to us. But with



due obedience to the sign thus shown from above to check our folly, I have great hope."

Few shared his hope, but none disputed his present judgment. We sat in the reek of the swamp, silent, watching the oily ripples that swirled by our soaking keels. The very sky was hostile; the hot sunshine glared cheerlessly. We pined for the bright air of Attica; and with the sickness of our hearts the sickness of our bodies grew, until half the men lay groaning.

The enemy had learned of all our plans, — there are traitors everywhere and always, and they, too, had their messages. But a little while before they would have been too happy to see our sterns sink down the offing; now they must see them sunk in the bay. The long stress of the siege, with its ever renewing perils, had raised their resentment to fury; and when they perceived that our thoughts were of retreat, theirs leaped to annihilation. No corn-ships passed them now. Soon they sailed to the harbour mouth with all their force, and linked the fronting forts with a chain of barges.

Then a cry went up. There was no more talk of the moon — even by Nicias. We rushed to our ships. But Meletus stood on the shore with folded arms; he would not budge.

"This is not the way of it," he said to Nicias, who came in person to urge him, well knowing his value. "It may be, my — Nicias, I would say — it may be I have a better thought of you than once; and you may see I am heeding that about the flagon



and ill words. But think you, old lad — Nicias, I would say, but the tongue kinks on it — think you yon bar of the gut will not lie there to-morrow, that you rush upon it thus, without order or preparation? I tell you, we are in no plight.”

He prevailed. Nicias glanced at the galleys: many were beakless; scarce one had full oars. The stampede was checked; that day and the next were spent in making ready. We repaired the gaping wounds, cut new oars from any timber, and finally set iron grapnels on the prows.

“They will have it a land fight on water,” grumbled Meletus. “They have given me fifty Acarnanian slingers for my deck, to whack each other’s heads with swung stones. They will swaggle at every pull of the oars, — if so chance they sicken not, which may the god avert! I shall be sunk to the lower ports, with water swilling in at every lurch; yet I have a thought to turn those animals to some utility.”

“The grapples may help,” I said.

“The tongs? They will catch no fish, lad. That Corinthian cobbler has seen them, and is shoeing his toes with hard hides; those claws of old Nicias will but scratch on cowskin. ’Twill be a queer manner of fight, lad; the gods in heaven will laugh.”

Perhaps there was laughing on Olympus; there was none among men. We climbed to our places with tears and prayers. Demosthenes and Menander were to lead, but Nicias stood by the ladders and exhorted us, each one. Our gods, our native city,



mothers, children, wives — there was nothing he did not say; and as we drew off, heavy with the burden on our decks, he still called after us. All Syracuse was gathered on the sea-walls, gazing down upon the bay, and all our army, sick or well, stretched along the shore. Their faces were strained and white; their bodies swayed to the swing of our oars; they cheered us with shaking voices.

I was not on the ship of Meletus, and presently lost sight of him; but I noted that he had a false beak set under his ram, projecting by at least a cubit, close to the water. He seemed to avoid encounter, slipping in and out like an eel, and soon vanished in the press. For the enemy met us in mid-harbour. I had been assigned to Demosthenes, and stood by the bow in full panoply. We, too, avoided encounter as best we could, and made for the chain of boats. We reached it; we beat upon the barges, some of which we foundered, but the chain bore them up. And now the hostile galleys closed in on every side: their horns were grinding in our ribs; missiles fell everywhere; no voice could be heard a ship-length, for all the tumult of battle was blended in a roar that stunned the ear and bewildered the heart. Our grapples slipped, but it scarcely mattered; two hundred ships lay crushed together like a disordered raft. Yet scores of little boats from the docks dashed through every opening, breaking our blades with axes or shooting in at the ports; and it was against these that Golas proved of most service, though he also swept the decks of



triremes with arrows that fell bloodstained on the further side, — for he shot at close quarters. Gangways crashed, bridging ship with ship; and on these the charging hoplites met and strove, until the heave of the sea flung down both bridge and men, and the gleam of sinking brass filled the waters. Twice I sprang back barely in time; darts hung in my shield; my sight was dull with blood and sweat and buffets, my thoughts were mere turmoil.

Then a great wail came from the shore. The press behind us loosened; we, too, were borne back; the remnant of our fleet was in flight. We ran with the rest; but the blunted beaks in chase were hard on our sterns as we leaped to land, leaving the stranded galley where it lay. The howl of triumph from the ships and walls of Syracuse drowned the moan of the camp.



## XXIX.

### *Slave and Poet*

NIGHT had fallen: shouts and drunken songs echoed across the bay; the city was mad with wine and triumph, and the air above it rosy with the glow of torches. In the camp all was dark, and its sounds were in another note: the groans of the wounded and the sick, the low curse of despair, and prayers that breathed as little hope. The generals sat in dismal council.

"We have still some sixty ships," said Nicias, slowly, "and the enemy, I think, have hardly so many fit for use. Let us strike again at sunrise; there is nothing else."

Demosthenes and all the rest assented. They called Meletus.

"It might be, old lads," he said, cheerfully. "They are lacking an adequate pilot now, and we, mind you, have no such deficiency. But the men will not board, neither mine nor any. I will print your wish on their backs with a tiller-stick if such is your advisement, but nothing will come of it save a strain on the wood and a manner of pain to the ears of old Nicias there." And this they soon found to be the truth.



“We must flee by land, then,” said Demosthenes. “We may still win to Catana by a circuit through the hills.”

“Not to-night,” exclaimed Nicias. “It is useless to start to-night. We are ill equipped and the ways are beset; I have a sure message.”

The uproar rising from behind the city walls did not suggest it; but he was insistent. We lingered the whole day following. And while we waited, —

“It pinched my heart, lad, too,” said Meletus, “but I did it.”

“Did what?” I asked, gloomily.

“Sunk him — trireme and all. It is a bitter loss to the craft — the more that he was of the enemy, who lack — but I needs must.”

I looked up with a show of interest.

“I forgive him, lad — everything. He met me fairly in the upshot of it, and in some reasonable space of water. But I made the less of that; there would be no catching him behind or beside, and I knew it well. He ever turned on me, like that snake of Egypt who sits in a coil of his own cordage, as it were, and swings his reared head in the manner of a mast. So I ran straight at him; for I thought, ‘He is hard above with his horns and bracements, but below the lap of the swell it is likely he has made no provision, for his art is mere Corinthian when all is told.’ You marked, perhaps, the rig I had set for him. Those slingers I had massed in the waist, with their sling-stones in ballast, and at the word I ran them forward, so that we dipped with



the strike of the beak. They went with no judgment, lad, and near foundered us; we had in a swashing cargo of water, but hit where 'twas soft. There is nothing more of it, lad; yet Meletus would give a full sack, so he had it, to see that Ariston dry again and warm with wine. 'Twill be but clumsy fighting now, — if ever we reach the good brine." And with that thought even Meletus sighed heavily.

The ways were indeed beset when we started on the third morning. Such of the sick as were not quite helpless trailed after us; the rest we left there, wailing, crying to every god. That almost burst our hearts — but how did it matter? They would only die the sooner, and by an easier course of death than most of us.

I was one of the last to go; and as I stumbled over a prostrate body it half rose and clasped my legs, while a weak voice whispered my name, "Theramenes!" I looked down; it was my school-mate, Myron. "Save me," he moaned, — "do not leave me to die here, Menion."

I commanded Golas to take him up. The slave bore him until we had crossed the river, then set him down, puffing: "Ookook — carry master — carry Gorka — not carry this."

I myself could scarcely carry my panoply; we had eaten no breakfast. And we could not pause; the Syracusan cavalry was close upon us. We ran on with what strength we had, through a straggle of crawling cripples whose strength was ever less;



I did not pause when I heard a cry — there were many cries.

I shall not — cannot — tell the story of that dreadful march. It seems to me now but a nightmare, eight days long; I cannot even remember it clearly. That time is but a blur of hunger, weariness, weakness, heat, and thirst; of hostile spears, cries, wounds, and hopeless terror, such as never comes except in dreams and when the sick soul reels toward madness. If the road led up a hill, there was the enemy; if we entered a wood the place became a labyrinth, with a Minotaur at the end of every path; if we crossed a plain, horse danced amid wavering dust-clouds on front and flank and rear; at night, if any slept, he still was marching; none even dreamed of home. Yet through this black despair a voice kept crying in my heart, — “Not here, but at Athens; not now, but after Gorgo, won and wed.” And this alone bore me up.

We had left the camp with forty thousand men; we still numbered some thousands. Of the fate of Demosthenes we knew nothing; he had fallen behind with all his host. Our way was lost; we were drifting southward with little plan or aim, not where we would but as we might. At last we halted on the high, steep bank of a stream, and here Gylippus overtook us. He demanded instant surrender; Demosthenes, he said, had already yielded.

But this Nicias could not believe; he no longer gave credit to any messages. And we — we be-



lieved anything ill, but cared not; our thoughts were all on the water that boiled in the channel below, for we were crazed with thirst. Down the slope we poured, while the enemy's line of lances urged from the rear. We plunged our faces in the turbid eddies like trampling beasts, filling our gullets with mud and slime, and soon with a redder flow; for the ravine was quickly filled from brink to brink, and those above were spitted by hundreds on the pikes that bristled from beneath. Some were crushed, some drowned, deep under the press; many more the torrent swept away, to be shot like fishes in the water by the archers who lined the shore. Spears rained on our struggling mass, and these, striking downward, impaled us by twos and threes. I wonder that any could breathe that air, so full of ghosts; in no battle had so many died.

Then Nicias cast down his shield before Gylippus. "Deal with me as you will," he said, "but stop this slaughter. Yet was Nicias honoured in Sparta once, and esteemed her friend."

Gylippus looked on him with eyes that triumphed not unkindly. "I would save if I might the man who was once a friend of Sparta; but I think it not easy. They will wish to slay, and they love me little. Yet should a better wit prevail, surely the ransom of Nicias will be worthy of his name and wealth?"

"Any ransom, if ever Nicias should see his own. But end this killing."

The trumpet sounded; the storm of missiles



ceased to beat upon our unresisting flesh. They dragged the living from among the dead; they shackled us two by two, and drove us captive. Some mistakes they made; the wounded Imbrian with whom I was linked soon fell, but they cut him loose and left him in the dust; the dogs from every village followed us. We were brought to the city in one long march, — so small was the distance we had covered in all our wanderings; yet the night was upon us long before we reached the gates, and the moon, now crescent, ploughed the cloud-foam like a merchant bark with lifted peaks, giving light that was wind-tossed and shadow-broken.

We were near the bridge of Anapus, clanking along the Helorine way. We had been much beset since night-fall by a sort of brigands; half Syracuse, it seemed, was out on a slave-hunt. Our guards heeded it little; they were few along the flanks, though a great force marched behind, and none was close when I felt myself suddenly snatched from the line and dragged away into the darkness amid the thickets that edged the stream. I did not resist; if I had become a slave, what matter whom I served? My captors were masked, but the hair of one showed white, and something in his figure seemed familiar. They threw me into a boat, ran softly down the river, crossed the bay, and entered by the port. The water-front and the broader streets were ablaze with riot, but they led me through devious lanes to a house in a rather secluded quarter. Here they entered; they used me kindly enough, offering



food and drink, after which they thrust me into an empty store-room, where I slept like an ox on the pallet of a slave. At last some one shook me by the shoulder; I roused dully and sat up.

“Is it, then, already morning?” I asked. For the place was windowless and dark.

“It is broad day, — but not as I conjecture you conjecture; for my conjecture is that you conjecture wrongly.” And he smacked his lips on the phrase. “It is the morning of the second day; two nights and one full day has the child of mischance drowned from his life in the deep oblivion of the shadow-sweet waters of gently flowing Lethe.” Again he smacked his lips with the relish of it. Somewhere I had heard that voice before: the accent was almost Attic, though he chanted this last with the swaying cadence of a rhapsodist. “Yet I blame you not at all, for you were spent utterly, and the soul of woe lay drunken under the skinny thatch of its bone-propped tenement. It is a notable incident, and I shall utilise it for a play. Alcinous shall speak these words to Odysseus when I have set them in proper metres and fittingly led up to it. I must have a note of them while the melody lingers. Can you write, boy?”

“As a soldier may; but mainly with the spear-point in red characters on untanned hides, — and most of my books, I think, are burned.”

“Now that is notable — a notable answer. It shall be spoken by Odysseus to Alcinous at sight of a parchment. What it lacks in the grace of the



finishing touch of art I shall add; it will doubtless come with the trip of the metre. You will be of service to me, boy. Perhaps you are not wont to be called *boy*, but you are aware it is the customary term for one speaking thus to his slave."

Boy! I had indeed been called so — but with what a difference!

"Come forth, boy. I would scan your face. I have hope you are much above your station."

I stood in the light — before my master. I blenched — as I have rarely blenched at any sight. For this master — it was our Syracusan slave of long ago! and I — the slave of a slave! He surveyed me with evident satisfaction, and quite without recognition as I quickly perceived.

"Yes, you are truly of Athens; it is evidenced by tongue and feature alike. Of good blood, I would judge; I have seen something of your better families. And that conceit of yours about the spear — it was worthy of your own Euripides, only lacking the polish of a more perfect art. I shall put you to the higher uses, Glyphon. For I shall call you Glyphon, boy."

"Call me what you will." At the least I was glad he had not chosen to call me some such thing as Manes.

"That too is good. 'Call me what you will' — it is no such notable conceit as the other, but it has the true ring of a tragic answer. You shall guide me in the proper Attic phrasing; this outlandish gabble of our Syracusan streets harms the delicate



taste in phrasing. Yet I myself have been in Athens, Glyphon; you may easily know it by my speech. I have taught in that city; I have been somewhat of a sophist in my rawer time, and my name is not wholly unknown there."

The liar! yet all he had said was after a fashion true.

"That name, however, you may not readily recall," he continued, "as being but a hurtler of the spear, though seemingly of good understanding. Philolerus I am called; it is needful that my slave should be apprised of it. You will speak of me always — especially when you go to buy papyrus at the book mart — as Philolerus the poet, whom you serve as scribe; that incidental matter of the aid in phrasing you need not mention. For understand, I am now a rising poet of the tragedy; my 'Vengeance of Cronus' would have been exhibited but for jealousy. I had in it speeches above two hundred lines in length, richly embroidered with flowers of sentiment plucked from the gardens of Theognis. For I flit from blossom to blossom, and gather honey like the wandering bee."

His familiarity with the tiresome maxim-maker I only too well remembered. But this bee, I hoped, would prove stingless; for though I might easily crush such an insect with one blow, I could not escape the whole Syracusan hive. What followed was less reassuring.

"When I am composing a play," he said, with a smirk of infinite vanity, "I ever enact the leading



part in my mind; I become, as it were, that I portray. Of late I was Cronus himself, and you might well have fared ill with me. 'Might well have fared ill' — is it not a neat and artful phrasing? But I am now writing a play of which Odysseus is the hero, and you will find me courteous but very cunning. Yet should I chance to strike you, remember, I am but smiting Thersites. It is quite likely I shall strike you at times; there is a sort of frenzy in the act of poetastic composition."

A frenzy in devising frigid quibbles and appropriating proverbs from Theognis! I almost laughed; yet if indeed he should lift that puffy hand against me, it would be no laughing matter. But the prudence of Odysseus prevailed; he harangued unceasingly, like the bullying schoolmaster he was, but never struck. Perhaps he read a warning in my eye that I too had my moments of frenzy: he was ever a coward.

I shall not detail those days of my extraordinary servitude: the humiliation is too great. For this I had come to Syracuse! Yet I laughed each night as I lay on my pallet at the sheer absurdity of this fling of fate; but for that, I believe, I should have driven the stylus through my heart and ended it. My main employment was to write from dictation, sitting hour by hour with a heavy tablet on my knee, rubbing the wax unceasingly to make erasures, as he revised each silly sentence to a more studied badness. Then would come the copying of this wretched stuff upon the papyrus, in the which I tried



his patience greatly, for I was but clumsy with the reeds and he could ill afford to waste the sheets. Well, it could not last forever, and the crisis came thus.

He often took me with him when he walked, — still with the tablets, lest any precious quirk of speech escape the wax. One day he led me past the quarries — by design, I think — the deep sinks and caverns in the native rock where the remnant of our captive army lay entombed. For a tomb it seemed, — at least, they had no other, and there the dead of weeks lay heaped among the living; the stench as I approached the brink was horrible. Only the soul could escape from such a dungeon; and their souls were flitting fast. Their fever-stricken bodies, such as had life, sweltered under the noon-day sun and chilled in the night-frosts; the air they breathed was corruption; few would breathe it long. Though a scanty portion of corn and scantier water-sacks were from time to time let down to them, it seemed the last malice of cruelty to feed their misery. No charnel-pit was ever like this place.

“So deal the gods with those who thought to deal thus with others,” said the Syracusan, grandly. “So rots the lust of conquest. Behold from what I have saved you, boy.”

May the gods forgive me if I felt a sort of gratitude!

“In the hour of pride the avengers set their snare. Write it down, boy. Their bait is the deadly delu-



sion of arrogance. We are meshed in the web we have woven of the threads of folly."

A herald stood on the opposite verge of the chasm. "Hear, all ye accursed!" he proclaimed; and some of the dying wretches raised their heads. "Hear the magnanimous edict of the sovereign people of Syracuse, in behalf of the Spartan Gylippus, who came within their walls in the hour of despondency, and though little aid was needed wrought what he might to fling you where you lie. And he shall have his reward, for the people of Syracuse are not ungenerous. The lives of Nicias and others in chief command they could not justly grant; and these are long since dead. But this they bestow: ten captives of rank and good estate from Athens, to be his for ransom or death. Give ear, and if any thus elect lie in the den below, let them crawl to the place of the rope."

He began the reciting of names; mine was third on the list. I sprang forward.

"I am he; I am Hagnon's son," I cried.

"It cannot be — not the son of that Hagnon!" yelled my master.

The officer eyed him coldly. "There has been some thieving here, old fellow; no native Athenian has yet been sold. But what proof have you?" he asked me. "We know well that a slave will say anything."

"Yes, he lies; he is lying; they all are liars. Rob me not of my slave. I am a poet, harmless and poor."



"I see no brand-mark," said the officer, lifting the hair from my brow. For I had run to him.

"I was kind. It was an error, but I did not brand," persisted my kidnapper.

"Fool," said the other, "it was not yours to do branding."

"Take me before Gylippus," I besought him. "I will bear any scrutiny. Surely some among you have seen me in fight, with Golas, my slave."

"The devil archer? Yes, that beast was ever with Hagnon's son; it is common report. Bring him before the examiners to-morrow at early market; and mind that you tell a straight story, poet." The man would listen to no more, but turned to those who moaned at the foot of the rope.

"Haul up him who claims to be the son of Meton," he commanded his servants.

My frightened master led me back to the house, bewailing himself with every step. "Why did you not tell me? I have used you well; I have been kind. Why did I not think to brand? The son of that terrible Hagnon! It is heaven's justice. Yet I cannot keep him. He will surely betray; already he has brought me into peril. My slave! Not mine by mechanical process of purchase, but the god had long willed me this, and I but took my own. I cannot lose my slave. And it is Hagnon's son, — that little viper's spawn who would have struck me with a knife. He should be scourged for that — scourged. The gods be merciful! I know not whether they send me this for a curse or a



blessing. Hagnon's son! it is most just. Yet I cannot keep him even though they should believe me. I have lived days of peril, and knew not. I have warmed that snake in my bosom when I might have had vengeance. The gods have blessed me with a slave; and he goes from me — unlashed. You have robbed me, boy. I am a poet, and poor; I cannot endure this loss. But I am now Odysseus: I will be swift and crafty."

He locked me fast in my chamber; but I heeded him so little that I slept, and my dreams were of Gorgo. I awoke with a strangling gripe about my throat, and just beyond the door, —

"It shall be three minas," said a voice, "and even so it is but to throw away; it is a loss. Yes, it shall be three minas, because it is the noble Syracusan, who is poor and wishes the silver; but it is loss. They are so many now, and for the slave of Syracuse there is little market. If he be not quite sound it shall be less; and you have yourself said the slave is not submissive. Yes, he shall have the brand, but it is risk. Oh, yes! it is best to brand, — but at sea, where they hear not the cry. Bind him quickly, Pardocas, and smother well the face."

I was wound with rope from neck to heel, my head muffled in a leathern sack; and so they bore me through the midnight streets.



### XXX.

#### *The Brand of the Beast*

I LAY in the gloom of the hold and listened to the crashing of the waves; I felt the throb of my fetters with each pulse of the oars, until every stroke was like the falling of a lash. My heart was sick with dread; I knew neither my port nor my doom: yet at last the stark weariness of this bondage proved worst of all, and the torture of the hours grew insupportable. Then it is that men writhe in their irons and beat their clashing limbs against the planks, and cry to the heavens they cannot see for shipwreck, though they sink in chains! I too — I raved with the rest; for the hold was full of this agony. I suppose I had long been frantic: all sense of day or night was lost; in that darkness and delirium I did not even note what lay beside me. At last the dim form rolled over and spoke.

“I doubt not we are headed for Styx as you say, lad. But by the three throats of him who will bay at our coming, strive to hold more steady on the keel. My wrist is near broke with your comfortless pitchings; and mind you, the use of the wrist is necessary to a pilot, even at the breach of Styx.”



“Gods!” I groaned. “Is it you? Oh, the gods! it is the branding; he will brand us, Meletus, full on the brow. And then he will sell us to the Persian.”

“I would think it likely, lad; such, at least, is the usual manner of it. Yet mark you, there is ever a straight course open down to Styx; they cannot close it, lad. But by the good god of the flagon, I am glad you are by me. Hold fast to Meletus, lad, and he will get you across. I would shame to think that a pilot of any experience could not contrive the passage of a channel like yonder Styx, even though we should come there lacking the obol. I will rig an acation of such wreckage as may lie there; and if yon Charon, whose craft, I surmise, is not of the newest, should attempt to hinder, I will practise upon that old god a sequel of sudden devices from the navy of Athens.”

With this he made me laugh in spite of all. “How came you here?” I asked.

“Well, lad, Meletus but fared like the rest. I was taken in one of their hovels rummaging among the cargo; for as you might know, the thirst I was under was something quelling. It was a sort of admiral of goats that got me; they set me to the herding of goats, lad — me, Meletus. I lost those two-pronged beasts quite hastily, the whole convoy of them, for there was a manner of other beasts about; and then it behooved me, mind you, to lose myself with a sort of hastiness, too. And for where would I steer but the sea, lad? It was a



difficult navigation, but I made over a heavy groundswell to the beach, having with me a flagon obtained by violent entreaty of a country sort of a fellow on the way. May the fire-fork split me if I can tell more of it; but here I remembered myself and noted that you were by me, which I presently knew by the dig of your anchor flukes when they tossed on the cat-heads."

It may have been the next day — I cannot be sure; but we were far out on the sea. They led us up to the deck by fours, loosing the shackles that held our legs to the stanchions, but leaving our arms bound with cords. In the middle of the deck glowed a brazier, and in it lay branding-irons; a slave was fanning the coals, while the grim Nubian, stripped almost naked, stood ready. The Syrian, too, was there, — as shrunk and sallow as a shrivelled date which has hung on the tree until nothing is left but skin and pith. His eyes ran over us with a searching appraisement, but when they rested on me — he sprang back so suddenly that his gown swept the fire.

"Bel! It is Hagnon's son. It is he that took from me my archer, and smiled in the Syrian's face and threatened him with arrows." And he spoke not another word until he had made certain that Golas was nowhere near. Then, — "Just is Bel, and true is his promise: I will proclaim his kindness. For this has the Syrian prayed and made offerings of captives. Just is Bel, and liberal to the wish of him that worships."



I leaped at a hope. "Syrian, you know well my estate. Redeem me and one other; have your will of the rest. I — my father will pay any ransom."

"If he will ransom after the brand it is well. It is not in all cases that we ransom; it is not all of silver. Bel is gracious; I will not cast away the grace of Bel. I will brand; I will have my wish that Bel has granted me for prayers and gifts: we will then have speech of the ransom."

"I will never live branded."

"In the fetters there will be no choice. The Syrian will heed the counsels of the sophist — and may Bel grant me that one also. I will not kill; I will devise pleasures; I will greatly honour Bel. But at the last, when Tissaphernas has paid the golden darics, the Syrian cares not. Yet the merchant will be kind, as Bel is kind. This he will grant to the noble Athenian, whose father would pay much ransom, — he shall be last."

He spoke sibilant words in some strange tongue. The man beside me was seized and flung down; the Nubian stooped, the sun-white metal hissed; the shrieking victim sat erect, with the yellow fume still wreathing on his brow. They were laying hold of Meletus.

"Fires of the roasting-place under Phlegethon!" he howled, with a wrench so furious that no cords could withstand it. "It is a horse! me branded with a horse! a horse on the brow of Meletus!"

For an instant they stood confounded. That served: he snatched the scintillating iron from Par-



docas, swayed it in their faces, then turning burnt the ropes that bound me till they snapped and my arms flew free. They were rushing upon us, but he beat them back with his unapproachable weapon, and as they gave before him bounded upon the Syrian. I had caught up a riveting hammer and swung it with all my strength on the skull of Pardocas, while the red die sunk to the bone in the brow of his master, and its sputter merged in a yell that I trust was sweet to the ears of Moloch. Meletus sprang back with a vicious flirt of the brand at the nearest, kicking over the brazier as he passed.

"It will give them a manner of employment," he observed, "and since we are now for Phlegethon we may as well go blazing, in my view of it."

We fled to the stern: they pressed after us along the narrowing lift of the deck, but none came within stroke. They were slaves, who ever prefer the chances of the lash to the brunt of iron in the hands of freemen. One, indeed, brought a bow and let fly an arrow which crashed against the fan behind us; but the planks amidship were already flaming, and they soon drew off to fight the fire. The Nubian had not arisen; the Syrian, half-blinded, raged like all the furies, but to no purpose. The great sail flashed up and was gone.

"If any ship is within view that will signal it," I said.

"I descried three bearing toward us from the north," Meletus answered, "before the smoke came



in my eyes." He swung the sweeps so that the flames drifted forward. "War-ships, mind you. But they will scarcely reach us. I had no thought that these cattle would let the coals I spilled eat up the ship."

The shrieks from below grew terrible. "Gods!" I cried. "They will burn in chains."

"Only the gods can avert it, lad: it is a chance of the traffic. I see not that our case is better, save by freer choice of death, unless we can win to that trailer." For a light boat ran behind at the end of a cable.

But other eyes were upon it, and they too saw there all that was left of hope. When we strove to lay hold of the rope, the whole crew rushed upon us with the fierceness of desperation. I clubbed my hammer at short grasp; Meletus bent his branding-iron with savage lashings. Three fell and another went over the rail; the rest fell back, but not far, for the fire was close.

"They will rush again," I cried. "They will bear us down."

"It is likely. They still stand ten against two, and the heat has warmed their bowels. Listen, dogs!" he shouted. "You shall have yon trailer under compact of truce. But cease your ramming and lay alongside gently. If you ram us again I cast loose."

We passed them the rope; they cared for nothing else. We were soon alone on the ship; even the hold was silent, and the black smoke that filled it



oozed from the cracks by our feet. The planks were growing hot.

"Let us keep the deck while we may," said the pilot. "It is a close venture, but I had a better thought than be trampled by swine."

The water wheezed in the coals beneath us; the ship swung round and round; we were scorched by gushes of flame: but the plash of oars came on the wind. Meletus unlashed the sweeps and gave me one.

"Hold fast with the plunge," he said. And we leaped.

When we had our breath again we kicked hard and made out of the glare as fast as we were able. We were none too soon; the ship went down behind us with a squelching roar and a gasp of steam. But the peril was less than it had seemed. The sea rolled low; the foremost trireme was near; we were soon on its deck.

The men who crowded around us were Dorian; no Athenian ship was on these waters now. "What officer commands?" I asked.

"Gylippus," they answered. "Who else?"

"Make it known to Gylippus that Hagnon's son, Theramenes, would speak to him."

I stood before the sordid, able little captain who had ruined Athens. His sea-gown, soiled and rumpled, hung about him gracelessly; his hair streamed long and ragged; his eye was harsh but not cruel.

"Well?" he said. "I think I know you, Hag-



non's son. And that will save argument. Do you know me?"

"Listen, and you will discover. I was your captive even in Syracuse, of the ten that generous people granted you out of thousands."

"It is thus far true; and that old Syracusan fool who was scourged for it made away with you. It may be there was a substitute; but again you are mine."

"Yours, Gylippus, and gladly, if a captive to any. Now mark if I know you. My father, Hagnon, has gold. The Spartan has no use for that, — but it glitters."

"It glitters," he said. And his eyes glittered, too.

"For myself and one other, who was drawn from the sea after me."

"You mean the pilot. He was known by his oaths. It is he who sunk Ariston. He is dangerous; he has been laid in chains. It cannot be less than two talents for the pilot."

"Two talents and thirty minas more, if you set him on friendly land."

"It shall be done. Him I can easily convey ashore; that he should escape will seem plausible. And when all is said, the name is but a guess. Many swear by Phlegethon and that fire-fork, though few so heartily."

"And for myself?"

"For the son of Hagnon it will be five talents — no less. And you must go on to Sparta. You were



proclaimed in Syracuse, and the name has been spoken openly. But fear nothing: I will see you freed. I shall have influence now; nor is it in the eyes of Gylippus only that gold has a glitter. Not all that is paid will come to Gylippus."

To this we swore with binding oaths; and so far as might be he was true to his word. Meletus was set on the beach in the dead of night, not far from Naupactus, where they told me Conon was in command. But I sailed on toward Sparta.



## XXXI.

### *The Traitor*

“**B**Y the glory of Apollo, it is Hagnonidas!”  
he cried.

We had met in the streets of Sparta, face to face, — and there was no face in all Hellas that I less expected to see. He was dressed in a coarse gown, after the Spartan fashion; his silky beard was untrimmed, his hair fell to his shoulders; he even spoke with a Laconian accent. But the face — nothing could ever disguise its arrogant yet winsome beauty; no shame could dim the reckless, imperious light of those eyes. I knew him the traitor of traitors now; yet I could not hate — I still loved him.

“Alcibiades!”

“Nay,” he laughed, “I am Alcibiadas for the present. See you not that I am become a Spartan — and have a good hope that my line shall sometime reign amid the brood of Lycurgus. Is it not a noble ambition?”

Gylippus scowled. “If I were King Agis,” he said, “your line should reign in black Cocytus.”

“Never blame him, Gylippus. It will be no fault



of Agis if I delay my passage thither; but the good king is now harvesting in the fields of Attica. It was my own suggestion, dear brother in Lycurgus, like your own little pleasure trip to Syracuse."

The Spartan, pale with rage, muttered an oath.

"Dear brother of the mess-table, I deem you most ungrateful; I hear you have prospered. And how coarsely you swear! but an Athenian strain will presently amend these rude manners. I would gladly gratify your wish about Cocytus, which will doubtless be the brighter for my presence; but first I am pledged to sail in quite the opposite direction, eastward to Asia, — in the service of our common country, Gylippus. The wise Endius, who is my friend, has commanded it, and our Ephors, you know, must be obeyed."

"When the year is out that Endius will be no mightier than others," foamed the Spartan.

"True, Gylippus; you have uttered a Delphic truth. But then your recreant countryman, Alcibiadas, will be in Asia, where the rule of Lycurgus runs less strictly. And to answer truth with truth, I go not wholly in the interest of our revered Lycurgus. I would make it manifest to my loving kinsmen in Athens, who so justly voted me dead on lying charges, that my ghost still walks, and is dangerous. You cannot blame me, son of Hagnon," he cried, turning. "You, too, have cause to hate them."

"I will not call the betrayer of Athens my friend," I answered. But the words came hard.



“They voted their own destruction,” he retorted, hotly. “The gods are my witnesses, they forced me to it; nor can Athens ever be a fit dwelling-place for men while Demus rules and the demagogue is his minister. But call me what you choose,” he broke out, in a voice that echoed his mingled passions, “I hate not Athens herself. And I will befriend my friend, though, like my vengeance, it should cost new wars and wreck cities.”

And with that he put his arms about me in spite of the Spartan, while a new hope rose in my soul.

“Who knows?” he continued. “Did not our own Socrates, whose word is beyond Apollo’s, declare that I would make as well as unmake? I will yet return in triumph to a city saved from itself. But tell me of him. When did you see him last? I am hungry for the gossip of the painted porch.”

But I told him of other things — of Gorgo. We walked arm in arm through the village-like streets, while Gylippus followed sullenly. We made little account of Gylippus, whose influence, as I soon perceived, was less than he had boasted. The barracks were full of men who could execute; Alcibiades, who could plan, had the ear of the Ephors. And presently, crossing the wide square of the market, we stood in the judgment-hall before that dreaded five who were the true sovereigns of Sparta. Plain citizens they seemed, with hard, set faces, but the glances from beneath their shaggy eyebrows were keen enough.



"I bring Hagnon's son, of a name once honoured in Sparta," said Alcibiades, quite ignoring Gylippus, who fell back much cowed. My ransom was easily arranged, — three talents to the state. But this was the smallest part of what I meditated now.

"Your just claim shall be satisfied," I assured them, "and gratitude will be added. But I also have my claim: I demand my plighted bride." I announced it with an assurance worthy of Alcibiades himself.

"What is this?" exclaimed Endius.

"He demands Gorgo, ward of the miserly Rhyzon," interposed my champion. "They have long been betrothed; they were pledged in the days of the peace. I maintain his right. His father was long the proxenus of Sparta, and I claim for his son the right of intermarriage."

"We have heard," said Taurus, "that she is pledged to Lysander, the son of Aristoclitus, a youth of promise."

"Let her be summoned," said Endius, "and Rhyzon."

"Lysander also," added Taurus.

It was Gorgo who entered first, with downcast look and cheeks as pale as the gray of morning. But when she lifted her eyes — "Boy! boy!" she cried, "you have come; again you have come." And the dawn tints glowed as of old.

"Boy!" exclaimed Taurus, gruffly. "Is the young Athenian, then, your slave?"



"Ask him," she began, defiantly. "But no: I will not hear him called so even by himself."

"Be not presuming, Ionian Gorgo," said Endius, coldly. "Is it true that you are plighted to this Athenian?"

"By all the oaths that ever maid was plighted by, this maid is plighted," she said, softly. "And he bears my" — but here she stopped suddenly. "O Ephor, surely you revere the gods."

"An oath is a most sacred thing," said Alcibiades, solemnly. I looked at him; at another time I might have laughed.

"An oath is binding on the maker of it, not on others," broke in Taurus. "It is ill to let a woman of her will; but as being a Spartan born and promised to another —"

"She is no true Spartan," said Endius, interrupting.

"It is false," came a harsh roar from across the hall. "May the hound devour the tongue that utters it."

"Be silent," said Endius. "Rhyzon already has too much to answer for. The law of Lycurgus shall this day be vindicated."

"Give the maid to her plighted choice," pleaded Alcibiades. "Old Lycurgus had a heart; I will answer for him. Look in her eyes, Endius."

"She is mine: I will wed her in spite of gods or Ephors," I burst forth, unable to be prudent longer.

"So you shall; but defy neither to-day," whispered my advocate.



“We will hear Lysander,” said Taurus; and my old enemy came forward with reluctant steps. At his side walked another, no taller than Gylippus, and limping slightly, but with shrewd, firm, rather noble features, over which played the easy smile of habit. It was Agesilaus, a prince of the house of Procles. The two were close friends, and were talking together in low tones. Yet as they passed where I stood, “Accept no clog,” I overheard. “Strain neither law nor oath. Weigh not a woman against ambition.”

“Speak,” commanded Endius. “Do you lay claim to this maid?”

Lysander’s face was ashen, — all but the livid scar that streaked his brow. “I claim her by her uncle’s promise,” he answered, in a lifeless voice. “I claim her after twenty months. I will say no more.”

“I will sooner wed my grave, Lysander,” cried Gorgo.

“It is too much,” said Taurus. “Lead no unwilling wife, Lysander. It is not the Spartan custom.”

“Listen,” said Alcibiades. “I would not wed the goddess Aphrodite in this humour. And I speak not without knowledge. A maid will utter many idle words, but this is meant.”

“Ally the fortunes of Lysander to no alien blood.” The voice of Agesilaus rang sternly, and his smile was gone. “He who would rise must heed the Spartan law. Say I not well, Endius?”



“Aye, by the Carneian god. She is Ionian or I know not what. Daughter of Brasidas she doubtless is, but by no marriage that the state will sanction.”

“Yes,” said Gorgo, proudly, “I am of Ion. I was born where the violets bloom; I will be no more a shame to my father’s house. I will go to my own; or, if I may not, I will seek my father in that land where no Ephor can deny him his own daughter. I renounce your Sparta from this day.”

“It is enough. Her blood shall taint no Spartan family. An Ephor has spoken.”

“We confirm it,” assented the others. “The word that is spoken is ours also. You shall not do yourself this injury, Lysander.”

“Choose,” said Agesilaus, “between friendship and love. Not even Lysander may have both. Choose between passion and power. Is the blood of Lysander so pure that he would further mingle it?”

“I am chained and you hunt me with hounds,” cried Lysander, his face moist with the sweat of his struggle. “May the laws of that dotard Lycurgus be stricken with the spear-blight, and may you, Agesilaus, live to see it, for a cold and treacherous friend. Yet my friend you still must be, and before the spear of Sparta trails in the dust I will so wield it that all Hellas shall cower. Like Achilles, it has come to me to choose joy or fame; and his choice is mine. I cast her from me.”

“And for the wisdom of that choice, we pardon the rashness of the word,” said Endius.



"But the walls that shelter her shall fall," cried Lysander, still raging. "And this rosy flame that should have lighted my house shall be a consuming torch to yours, Athenian."

"Nay," I said. "Let us settle our quarrel point to point. What need of other spears and many victims?"

"Not here," said Endius. "He shall not fight a captive under ransom." Yet the Ephor looked upon me with approval. "It was boldly spoken."

"Truth," said Lysander. "He is worthy of my spear. To the son of Hagnon I surrender Gorgo: it is fortune's forfeit; but I take all else."

"Will you give my brother's daughter to a foreigner?" screamed Rhyzon.

"Did we not enjoin you to silence?" shouted Taurus.

"Peace," said Endius. "All in due season. It is the fault of your own neglect, Rhyzon. They were plighted, it seems, in your own hall; and strange things, we have heard, were done there. They were pledged, we must think, with Rhyzon's consent, for it was done, we learn, before his eyes. Dare you deny it?"

But Rhyzon could only curse beneath his breath.

"They swore with binding oaths," said the Spartan, judicially. "It was but the act of children, yet they made the gods their witnesses; and Alcibiadas, who has rendered Sparta great services, demands the fulfilment. It shall now be done in proper form."



And there they plighted us, before witnesses, a formal contract of marriage, even to the naming of the dowry.

"You have robbed me of my ward," stormed Rhyzon, helpless to restrain his anger. "It is rank injustice, and beyond your right. Shall the Ephors break the law and suffer nothing?"

"Fool," exclaimed Alcibiades, "have you lived so long in Sparta and know not yet that the Ephors are the law?"

"We but confirm your own act," said Endius. "We rob you not of your ward. But there is now another matter, Rhyzon. For this and many another violation of the Spartan law you go from Sparta, a banished man. An Ephor has spoken it."

"The Ephors have decreed it," chimed the others. "He has long been a rank offender; it has not escaped us."

"Go, Rhyzon," repeated Endius. "Let not to-morrow's sun see you in Sparta; and tarry not for that unlawful hoard, unless you prize gold more than life. This Ionian whom you brought for the defilement of our noblest blood take with you. The secret of her birth has long been known. Death is your due, but the Ephors are merciful."

"She is mine," I cried, loudly.

"Not yet. Betrothed to you she is, and none shall question it. But until she has attained the age of marriage no Spartan law can take her from her guardian."



"Then I will go with her. I will not be parted from her."

"Athenian captive, when you are free go where you will. You are now held under ransom."

"Let him go; I will be his surety," said Alcibiades.

"Such were not the terms," said the Spartan. "It is done, and may not be changed."

"Gods of Olympus! all men change," he cried. "I will not have it so."

"Silence! Presume not too far. An Ephor has spoken."

"Alcibiadas," said Agesilaus, "if you are Spartan enough to share our councils, you must also be a Spartan to obey."

For a time not one of us could speak. At last, "Hagnonidas, there is still a way," said he who never would admit defeat. He laid his hands upon my shoulders and fixed his eyes upon my face. "Renounce that rabble of Athens. They are my enemy and thine; they are doomed. Cast thy lot with me. There will then be no question of ransom; for this even the laws of Sparta will relax. Again I ask you: for Gorgo's sake —"

But all my soul surged up. I could not reason of this; it was not a thing of choice. "Not even for Gorgo will I be a traitor to my country," I cried.

"And that is well said, Theramnas," she murmured, close beside me. "Not for any oath —"



not even for Theramnas, would this Gorgo wed a traitor."

"By god's word spoken from the Delphic brass," exclaimed Agesilaus; "I think she is true Spartan."

"It is her father's strain, — but the law is still the same," said Endius. "Yet we would not be harsh — within the Spartan law."

"Thus, then, it shall be," proclaimed Alcibiades. "Rhyzon shall this night to Cythera, taking Gorgo. In three days I sail; certain helpers of mine will bring them off in boats, and I will take both to Ionia. With me they will be safe, and the rest is easy."

"I will go with the friend of Theramnas," said Gorgo, simply. And Rhyzon, glad of any protector, made no protest.

The eyes of Alcibiades gleamed. "Look at me, Gorgo," he demanded suddenly, planting himself before her. "Am I not more fair than Hagnon's son?"

"Oh, be silent," she cried. "You have been so kind: I do not wish to hate you." Then to me: "It is my turn after this day, Theramnas. Three times you have come to this Gorgo, and twice through peril. She will come to you now; for now she may, since all men know. Wait, Theramnas, and kiss no other lips; for Gorgo will surely come to you."

And so her light passed from me.



## XXXII.

### *The Arch-Conspirator*

**A** GAIN I was in Athens. To Gylippus, who had brought me to the border, I paid the full ransom of Meletus, though I knew nothing of his fate; but for the influence which had proved so weak in Sparta I would pay no price. He grumbled, but dared not detain me. I had good reason not to be lavish: my father's fortune was much impaired; there was little silver anywhere.

I stood again in Athens, — but it was not the city I had left. Its hope was gone; its docks were almost empty; its citizens scarcely served to man the walls: and this Alcibiades had wrought. A Spartan fortress frowned from a distant hill; the ravagers ranged all over Attica, and no field gave harvest: this also was his work. Of Gorgo no word had come; yet every day brought news of failing tribute and fresh seditions on the coast of Asia, — still at the traitor's prompting. Under his potent influence even the gold of Persia was cast in the scale against us.

But at that we roused. We stripped the very temples of their treasures; we borrowed from the



gods, and spent all on ships. We set on the benches any who could draw an oar — no questions were asked — and while our enemies waited for embassies, and the Spartans lagged on the hot trail of Alcibiades, we astonished the eyes of Greece with yet another mighty fleet sent out to save the empire of Athens.

“We’ll show them what Athenian beaks can do on open water,” said Thrasybulus, confidently. He was a trierarch now. “We’ll teach them that the city wasn’t sunk in the harbour of Syracuse. They’re no true seamen, and sea-craft doesn’t come in one campaign; they need a lesson. Hermes, but I wish Alcibiades were with us instead of against us! We would drive them off the sea in a month.”

Thrasybulus sailed with the rest, but I remained, by my father’s command; he was so insistent that I could not refuse.

“Let the reckless democrat go; the more the better. Your duty lies here, my son. The time is ripe; you shall see great things brought to pass, and you must share in the work. There is but one way that Athens can be saved. I have been reluctant, but Antiphon has convinced me.”

A committee of public safety had been appointed with extraordinary powers, and my father was a leading member. His reputation had never stood higher, but to me he seemed much changed. He was continually quoting the words of this Antiphon.

“Who, pray, is Antiphon?” I demanded. “Is



it not the rhetorician? I thought that you held him in low esteem, and now one would fancy he spoke from the fume of Apollo's oracle."

"He has been misjudged. He is the most wonderful man in Athens, my son, and the most eloquent, though he will not deign to go before the commons. Yet to such as lead them by the nose he supplies wit."

"A miserable sophist!" I exclaimed. "A closet demagogue, who devises wickedness and lays the risk on others! There is none in all the city who so deserves the bitter cup."

Then my father's anger flared. "Have I indeed such a son!" he cried. "Since when have you grown too wise to bow to your father's judgment?"

"When I see the judgment," I began, — but repented instantly.

He strove to control himself. "You speak like a child. You are still but a boy. I hold a high place in the state, and seek the good of Athens and my son's advancement."

"Seek it not through Antiphon."

"I seek it where I must. Do you not see that we are in desperate straits? Whatever fools may dream, we cannot fight all Hellas mailed in Persian gold. Only Antiphon saw the way and dared to speak. He is a greater statesman than Pericles, and far more right-minded. He is no demagogue, but his word is law in all our secret councils. He rules the clubs; do not make him your enemy."



“Some new treason, then, is hatching.”

“Athens is traitor to herself. She must be saved against her will, if at all; but first our city must be purged of clamorous voices and the voting-urns. The novelties we seek are but the older fashion.”

“Yes; treason is older than Attica.”

His face burned with wine and passion. “Babble not to thy father.” But he checked himself. “Be not unfilial, son. Has not our own Sophocles written it truly? —

Walk, son, in every act behind thy father’s will.

And says he not again? —

Obey in all things, small or great, and right or wrong.

“Then let us both obey the laws of our country, right or wrong.”

“The ancient laws, — but not the breath of ragged Demus. A usurper has no rights: Antiphon has made the matter plain to me. There is no treason in just vengeance. And is it not written? —

Refuse not healing from the hand that struck the blow.

And again, —

Who, erring, makes amendment, foils the blighting curse.

You should study the poets, my son, and commit to memory some passage every day. Your



mother greatly loved the poets. But indeed, I supposed that you were friendly to Alcibiades."

"Alcibiades!" I exclaimed, in amaze. "What is in your thought?"

He would tell me no more. "Go to Antiphon," he commanded. "I dare not speak further even to you. Go to Antiphon: he will make it very lucid."

Not even for my father would I go to this man; but he sought me out. He sat down beside me and talked in low, strong tones.

"Theramenes," he said, "you think of me, perhaps, as a sophist, but I shall deal very frankly with you. I know all that you said to Andocides, and think the better of you for it. None the less, what he said was true: we have need of you, and you of us. You must go with your own, — the more now, because of Alcibiades, whom we know to be your friend. Do you suppose that we have put your father forward thus for his own sake? that our hearts are hungry for Hagnon's wisdom? You see what he has become."

"I see that he has become Antiphon's echo," I said, bitterly.

"Mine and the moral poets'," he retorted, with a faint sneer. "He classes us together, as you may have observed. But you see the truth. I have such control of your ship that I can steer it against wind and tide, and any protests of yours will only serve to bring down anger and quotations. Already Hagnon has gone far. In short, he is quite in my



power; and a son who cares for his father will not leave him to walk alone where the daggers bristle when his sight is dim. For there are daggers. In that, too, Andocides was right, though I fancy he spoke of it too crassly for a man of your type. I know that you are not afraid of pointed steel. But daggers there are, and they are likely to be used. Understand me: I myself care nothing for Hagnon."

What could I say? Yet, "Into what treason would you drag me?" I asked.

He laughed. "Would you have me confess to treason?"

"I would have you speak plain. My father is your hostage — for my silence, at least."

"I will speak it plain enough. There is no salvation for Athens except by the recall of Alcibiades. Fools may fancy otherwise, but you have wit to see the truth. We have already had overtures."

"He will now betray Sparta also?"

"If it serves his purpose. Do you not know him? But he has quarrelled with them. King Agis is his deadly enemy, and Endius is out of office. So much the better for us. He stands in high favour with Tissaphernes, and will ballast our fleet with Persian gold. Then we may dictate terms. It is poverty that destroys us, — and the folly of the mob."

"But will the people consent to recall him — even for this?"

"He would not come if they did. He fears them;



some roaring voice might bray to them again of the mysteries. But to us he will come."

"Can you trust his promises? Can you or any others trust Alcibiades again?"

"We can trust his interest and his wit to see it — we, or any others. You know him well: do you not trust him — with certain reservations?"

I was silent. Had I not trusted him indeed? And almost without my knowledge another motive budded in my heart.

"Listen," said Antiphon. "The most dangerous voices are out of hearing on the fleet. Such as remain we will hush with daggers if need be. Your father's committee will do our bidding. Old Demus is much cowed; we will frighten him further with lies and arguments, and perhaps with a show of force. He will then cast one more vote at our dictation, and march down from the Pnyx to ascend no more. There will be no treason; Demus himself shall sanction our authority." His lip curled. "Four hundred, whose names are already listed, will then rule Athens; and you are to serve with the rank of general. Alcibiades asks it."

The whole black plot lay bare. I thought of my father. Yet, "I cannot," I groaned. I thought of Alcibiades; I thought of Gorgo. And still, "I cannot, Antiphon," I repeated.

"What flaw do you find, young man?"

"I will have no part in this cold-blooded scheme of murder."

"There will be no coldness," he laughed. "Your



old friend Critias, who leads the dagger-band, is hot enough. And when it comes to killing, Demus has done his share. Has the son of Hagnon no wrongs to avenge? At least you would not bar the dagger to a scoundrel informer like Teucrus, nor stand between justice and such a seducer of Athens as Hyperbolus?"

"No," I said, slowly, "they deserve the worst."

"I respect your sentiments, though they are youthful. I had meant to offer you Pisander, though he has joined us; but I see it would not suit. You shall have your way; I will keep the killing within due bounds,—and that is my own better judgment. Much killing breeds bitterness and discontent. Now observe: you may share our councils and save many lives; but unless I gain the support of men like you, I must humour such as Critias. For carry it through now we must and will. What more?"

"Four hundred alone can never hold mastery in Athens. When Demus sees so few, his courage will revive."

"What would you have? Do you favour the rule of the rabble?" And his face darkened.

"The rabble? Never!" Remembered wrongs and the whole tradition of my house swelled within me. "But I would hold as citizens the sane and the brave—all who come with a panoply to fight in the phalanx for Athens. It is nothing more than justice; and so only can we stand."

"How many?"



“Three years ago I would have said ten thousand; but as it is to-day, five thousand. Without these we but build on blood-wet sand.”

He frowned: again his lip curled. “Well,” he said, at last, “so be it. Five thousand citizens, and no more, — so they bear each a panoply and are loyal. But for this you must wait until we are fairly established.”

“Yet we may announce it even from the beginning. So we shall gain support.”

“You are right. It shall be announced — the names to be selected later.” He smiled. “You make strict terms with us, son of Hagnon. You will ask an oath, I suppose. Well, you shall have it. But let me tell you frankly, — you owe this weight of influence chiefly to Alcibiades. Are you satisfied?”

“If I could wholly trust you,” I answered him, “I should be more than satisfied. I should deem myself the greatest benefactor Athens ever knew.” And in spite of my doubts, my hope mounted high.



### XXXIII.

#### *A Message*

THE views of Antiphon as to moderation in murder were not the same as mine. This was soon apparent; yet he did restrain the thirst for blood that was among us. Some harshness was necessary — I could not deny it; the long license of mob rule is not quelled by soft remonstrance. Still, argument also was used, — one argument, for it was always the same: “How else can the city be saved?” With this we met every burst of angry protest; and at last, when no answer was found, the people, leaderless and daunted, voted as we bade them. With tears and rage they voted it, but so they voted.

We ruled in Athens: we, who had paid them tribute and been pelted with their stones! we, who had trembled before their informers, who had lain in their prisons, who had seen the life-blood of our kindred chilled with their hemlock! I do not defend what we did; but who can wonder that our mood was not lamblike?

When our spirits were somewhat sated, “Now,” I said, “the Five Thousand; you have had your killing.”



“Not quite yet,” said Antiphon, smoothly. “We must have more leisure to make a good choice; we must try them further.”

So the killing went on; and I grieved to see that the crop of sycophants was little reduced, for the vilest of them joined us. All around me, “The Spartans could do no worse,” I heard the people murmur. “And who are these? and how many?” As I passed the streets, “Where is that Persian gold?” came from unseen lips. “We behold it not. And that Five Thousand? We see but four hundred.”

Then it was that a message came from Alcibiades, hotly posted across the sea and with all secrecy:—

*To Theramenes, greeting:—*

*It is an ill greeting. I have lost her, son of Hagnon,—and you will ever curse me. We were parted in the storm. She would not go upon my ship because of idle words,—but who can stay the trickle of the tongue when honey is set before it? By my father’s soul, I swear it was less than jest; yet she flamed upon me and turned away—and Hagnon’s son will curse me. I blame you not; it was ill done, yet who could have thought it? The thing chanced off Delos: she sleeps on seaweed, doubtless, or gathers pearls; it was a storm to sink the very isles. May Phersephatta be gentle to her soul, for I am grieved,—and I know that you will hate me. Yet take it not too hardly. They are but*



*as the fish on our tables, which we taste but cherish not; and the sea is full of sweet fishes. Yet because of her eyes you will hate me; I am more pained at this than at anything that has befallen.*

*But this is not all, nor, I think, most important. I have brought you, I fear, into some peril; but I send you timely warning. Your Four Hundred are doomed: the army will none of it, and, if you will hear the truth, there is more of Athens here than yonder. There are firebrands among us, and the worst — nay, the best — is that young Thrasybulus who, I think, was your schoolfellow. Take heed, Theramenes: we are fairly crazed by the reports we hear — true or false, we believe them all. For here the wretched conspirators who sought to subvert our democracy are down, — dead, fled, or sworn anew with throat-cracking oaths. They declare that I did not wholly keep faith with them, Theramenes — but what could I do? Tissaphernes was obstinate. Anyhow, they rose but to fall, and you are like to fare no better; cut loose quickly, Theramenes. We have even meditated sailing against you, but from that our Alcibiades dissuaded us. For I am restored to the bosom of democracy now, Theramenes, and that torch of loyalty, your friend Thrasybulus, was the mover of my recall. He is really a youth of noble parts: we have chosen ourselves new generals, and he and I are colleagues. I still pay visits of state to Tissaphernes, but that is only a matter of form; the dull Persian cannot see that his interests are one with mine. But get out*



*from among those cracked vessels of venom, Theramenes, and come to us. We are now in the mood to win victories, and Hagnon's son must be with us. I am full of woe for her of the violet flashes; but let not thy Gorgon turn thee to stone, Theramenes.*

I sat like a stone indeed. As I read, all the currents of my soul were changed. Gorgo was dead! I did not hate Alcibiades: why should I hate him? I had no more cause to love or hate anything. Even his latest turn of treason I did not much reprove; I was growing used to treason. It might bring me peril, but what did it matter? What did anything matter, if Gorgo was dead? I would play the part assigned me: I would do my best to free my city from the tyranny I had helped to bring upon it. I realised now that it was for Gorgo most of all that I had done this thing — and she was dead. And I thought — with what bitterness — of Socrates! I had sought her by the path of broken oaths — how vainly! And she herself — she would not wed a traitor! Perhaps it was well that she was dead. And with that thought the passion of hate came back to me: I hated Antiphon and all his kind. Him I would punish; his work I would undo, if possible. Surviving that, I would rush through battle to my fate; I would die a loyal death — for Athens and Gorgo.

I had taken her pearls from the casket. “She shall never again find me without her token,” I



had thought. But the casket had seemed too empty; and despite our sunken estate I had filled it with jewels, that all might be ready against her coming. And now — I would cast them into the sea that she still might have them; and I hoped that even the terrible Persephone would not deny them to her. Of the Ephors, at least, she was free, and the gloomy gods of the underworld could scarcely be more grim, I thought.

I sought out Antiphon, resolved to make one more trial of his good faith; that failing, to turn. I found him pale, though cool; he had his own messages.

“The army has gone against us,” he said, abruptly. “I know it. Or have you come to tell me that Alcibiades has played us false? Blood of Dionysus! I thought we had him fast; but the people roll this way and that, like tossing water. They are fickle even in folly.”

“Name the Five Thousand: you have sworn it. Until they are named they are nothing, and we stand on emptiness.”

“Enough of that nonsense. Your trick of popularity will not serve. The phrase had a certain value, but is dead.”

“You are bent, then, on further killing?”

“I would kill my own son for party ends; he who heads a party must have no scruples. But, no: you were right in that; we have had excesses in violence. It is like the hemlock: a little brings stillness; too much is cast forth with retchings. You are known



in Sparta and have ties there," he said to me suddenly.

"Do you mean —"

"I mean that when Athens is Spartan ground we shall stand on substance. With Laconian pikes on yonder Acropolis we shall need no Five Thousand."

"And this you call saving Athens!"

"Saving ourselves. Are you the fool of a word? Learn a lesson of wit from Alcibiades; shall he outplay us? Answer me: will you go?"

"Announcing what?"

"That the gates will open. That through us they may rule all — Athens and Hellas."

This, then, was the issue of my hope! By such a service I was to be remembered! Not yet.

"Come," he said, "your answer? Do this, and you share with the foremost; you shall outshine Alcibiades. But the first step toward our betrayal pitches you into the barathrum."

"The day was when I valued my life," I answered. "But I must have breath; you must give me time."

"As you like," he said, turning. "I doubt you will have breath long; but take your time."

I went, not to Sparta, but among the people; also to the house of Aristocrates, deeming him a sure friend. I found him no traitor to Athens; and while he went to others in places where I dared not venture, I changed my captains and set at the gates men I knew. The nameless voices sounding through the streets cheered and blessed me now. I was



warned of every danger; I knew well that assassins sought my life, but the whole city was my body-guard. Then Eratosthenes, sent out by Antiphon some time before to revolutionise the camps, came back in hot haste from the Hellespont, fleeing on a merchant bark. I met him at the dock; the mob behind me shouted encouragement as I grasped his hand. He stood in dismay, at a loss what this could mean.

"Our case is hopeless," he said. "Every ship on the coast is against us. The fleet will accept the Five Thousand, but the Four Hundred they execrate. I was bold — bold, I tell you; I did my best, yet I barely escaped. Unless something is done, and that quickly, they will be upon us. Where is Antiphon? What can we do?"

I told him all.

"I am with you, Theramenes," he said, heartily. "I am true to my party, but not to this length. Besides, I have a life." And he joined us with all his kinsmen.

Antiphon had not waited. His embassy was already in Sparta, himself at its head. But the Spartan is ever slow in council.

Meanwhile my former colleagues were not idle: a mysterious fortress was rising on the water-front, commanding the harbour. The people cried out.

"What do you think it means?" I asked them.

"Treason," they shouted. "Betrayal to Sparta."

And then — "Are you things without heart?" I shouted back to them. "Are you nothing more



than those stones? If you think they mean treason, fling them down. And if any would rob you of your city, fling them down."

They were Athenians. The echo of their answer rang along the walls; all the city heard it. They ran to the shore, and the stones were scattered. The Four Hundred, too, were scattered; few dared to linger on Attic soil. The people only asked a leader — and I led them.

A Spartan fleet looked in at the harbour mouth, but the guard-ships were manned and ready. Agis knocked at the gates, but none opened.



## XXXIV.

### *We Three*

**A**FTER the heat of this action had passed, I sat pondering a long while, and when I arose these maxims were deeply graven on my heart. It was stony enough to receive them now.

Fair play is not to be expected in the world as it is.

We must take the world as it is.

Threatened is warned; strike while threats are but voices.

The means that accomplish good are good; faith is not for the faithless.

I do not defend these precepts; but thus the dagger-point had graven them within me, with scars of the soul which time has not effaced. There are higher standards, doubtless: I know that Socrates walked by quite another rule; but I had ceased to seek his counsels. "Wrong can never be right," he was always saying, "and what else is requiting injury with evil but a double wrong?" But I thought, if the evil they do shall not be visited upon their heads, the world will be the kingdom of the worst. The gods?—I thought of Apteryx with some approval: I could not see their



handiwork about me. My mother had died in agony. And Gorgo, so sweet and true — she was dead. God-fearing Nicias had ruined Athens. The easy treachery of Alcibiades prevailed. And Antiphon — who had foiled him? who but I? To Antiphon I first applied my maxims.

Unsuspecting, he had returned from Sparta — to fulfil his treason; we took him at the gate. The shock he got was of the sort that sometimes drives men mad, but his face showed no disorder or concern.

“I demand a trial,” he said, and that was all.

It was more than had been accorded to most of his victims; but after he had lain in prison for a proper length of time, we tried him in due form. I myself appeared as his accuser.

“I think you are too hard with Antiphon,” protested my father.

“As hard as the furnace-baked iron,” I answered, “and I hope of an edge that will cut.” My heart was like gall as I thought of those contemptuous words, “I care nothing for Hagnon,” and the rest of it. I did not repeat them. Why fret my father? Better to avenge him.

But before the court I was wary. I brought no charge against Antiphon for his plot to subvert the democracy: in that I had shared, however much misled, and the people had sanctioned it, however influenced. I said little of broken oaths and lying promises; for what could I prove? I did not even press the murders he had abetted; that I left to



others. But for his attempt to betray the city to her ancient enemy I demanded his life with all the bitter eloquence of hate; and I had my will.

Yet he almost escaped me: his defence was masterly; in the logic of falsehood he never had an equal. He made truth improbable, and turned its edge with a thousand evasions, like a Thracian in sword-play. He was almost acquitted; he saw his advantage and presumed upon it — too far. For he turned on me: he drenched my name with all the blood I had striven to save; he flung in my face the vilest dregs of his own infamy. He forgot himself: the spell was broken, the orator was gone, and all saw him — a reared snake, spitting venom.

“Come,” I said, when at last he ended, “I confess the rest also. It was I who went to Sparta — I but seemed to be among you. It was I who was taken at the gate, and Antiphon denounced me. I will not add another word; the eloquence which persuaded you to resign your rights is too strong for me. You have heard; you have seen; you have suffered. It is plain that some one ought to die. Decide between us.”

As when a well-aimed stone has snapped the neck, the serpent's crest had fallen. Where the forked tongue had quivered a pale face rose and strove to speak, but they would hear no more. I felt no pity; yet another might have pitied. As he watched them dropping their ballots in the urns, I knew that even



then he was tasting the hemlock. Another day, and Antiphon was but a hated memory.

Not long after, I broke the seals of a letter from Thrasybulus. Thus spoke the wax:—

*Greetings, Theramenes, and all that. Twice within the year you have astonished me; there have been days when I whetted my sword for you. Yet I might have known; you are still the same. It was the Five Thousand you wanted—and Alcibiades. I do not quarrel with you for that; I think myself we have been too lax. But when that wretch Pisander told us you were urging on the daggers along with Critias—who, I hear, has run away to Thrace like the wolf he is—then, Theramenes, I whetted my sword. It was Alcibiades who set me right about you. My place was here—I have done great things, Theramenes—but it is well that you were in Athens. I cannot deal with those fellows,—but you, somehow, always have the right word. I was beside myself to believe Pisander in anything; he, too, has fled, I learn. But of all that has come to us, this latest is best: you have poured the dumb hemlock on the tongue of Antiphon. Yet I cannot credit it that we have heard the last of him, Theramenes. The tongue that could persuade Athens to oligarchy will convince the very shades of those he slaughtered; he will start a sedition in Hades', and send up ghosts to disturb our peace at night.*

*But I have filled a whole leaf of my wax with*



idle words. *We prosper, Theramenes; while the Spartan jangles with the Persian and waits for slow Phœnician ships, we are winning back our revenues. Those Spartans have no wit to follow up advantage; and Alcibiades, whose hand is everywhere, is worth ten of Tissaphernes,—he is never at a loss. And he is truly loyal now, Theramenes; I have made it clear to him that it was not the people who betrayed him. Come out to us, Theramenes; the people will grant you anything you ask. Alcibiades also desires it; it is at his suggestion that I write, for he says you hold hard feelings against him about some matter of a woman. Now do not be so foolish, Theramenes, as to let that weigh. I know those things are provoking; but remember, I never held any grudge against you on account of Myrinna, though I shall always think you were not quite fair with me. And you know Alcibiades; one must put up with his ways. Let it go: come and join us, Theramenes.*

Myrinna! I cursed her very name; the mere mention of it seemed an offence to Gorgo. But what of her? she was less than nothing; I had not thought of her for fifty moons. Thrasybulus remembered Myrinna! it seemed absurd. But Gorgo! I would go to her soon, and find her — “even in that darkness.” Yet I must go by a brave path, lest she scorn me. I would join my friends, and live in action till I died.

So I asked for a ship; they gave me twenty, but



sent me first to gather money on the Thracian coast. Here I learned that Critias was arming the serfs of that region against their masters. I made small collections, but skirted the shore, taking what I could, and presently met Alcibiades in the Hellespont. There were tears enough at our meeting, for the sight of him filled my soul with grief for Gorgo; I could not help but weep, while he both wept and laughed, — it was so easy for him to do either. But indeed, I found him in high spirits. He had just won a victory off the Trojan plain, in full view of the heights of Ilium; and this had elated him out of all reason, because it was a triumph in the very footsteps of Achilles, whom he regarded as his prototype and model.

“My revenge has been like his,” he was fond of explaining. “Such as we cannot be insulted with impunity, but when the fit is past we make good all and more. Even that treason of mine, as you were pleased to call it, son of Hagnon, was no other than his — except that I could never sit loutishly within a tent, as he did. I account it no treachery to strike at those who seek my life; nor do you, as our lamented Antiphon bears me witness. But because of the violet sparkles that are quenched, you may call me anything, Hagnonides,” he would conclude, regretfully. “It may well be that the flavour would have cloyed; but now she will ever be to you like the fragrance of untasted fruit.”

“Say nothing more of Gorgo.” So at last I begged of him.



He turned his eyes on me with a flush of surprise. "You speak of her in tones like one who prays; you take it much to heart. I would find you a substitute more luscious than Olympian Hebe — but have it as you will."

A few days later Thrasybulus joined us. He shouted with joy when he saw us together.

"Now we shall win — we three; I have always said it. You have done this rightly, Theramenes, and like yourself; now is no time to think of women."

We pressed the Spartans hard, and set up trophies. Then came a reverse. Alcibiades still paid visits to Sardis — one too many. The satrap, frightened by ominous whispers, laid his guest in chains; for a month we mourned and waited.

"We have lost him," said Thrasybulus, "and that is the worst loss yet. It is twenty to one they have set him in the boat — an awful death, past all telling — and Alcibiades! Why would he tempt the Mede?"

"He will escape," I insisted. "No chains can hold him. He would escape from behind the gates of Pluto, like Sisyphus."

Say anything you will: it shall some time and in some way be fulfilled, — but not often so promptly nor so according to intent. For while we were speaking a great clamour arose, and who else but Alcibiades dashed into camp, riding wildly on a Persian horse and in Medish robes stained with sweat. He leaped down, but did not pause



to change his array — scarcely to greet his friends. All the army was thronging forth and crowding about him, and thus he addressed them. I had never seen him so roused: —

“Do you wonder to see me? I, too, wonder, — but enough of that. Expect nothing more of the Persian but the clatter of arrows. His gold is against you; his horse is against you, and his ships; he is our foe from of old, and we from of old have vanquished him. Are you murmuring still for your pay? You shall earn it. You must battle by land and sea, and batter walls; their gold is yours when you wrest it out of their citadels. From to-day it is war, not words.”

And under his leadership war was victory. We lured the enemy's fleet forth from Cyzicus, swept behind it through the mist, drove it to shore, and burned it on the beach. We fought with Pharnabazus and his horsemen in the surf, slew Spartan Mindarus amid his wrecks, and routed all his pikes. Then it was that the message meant for the Ephors was read in Athens: “Our timbers are broken; our men are starving; we know not what to do.”

For a time they could do nothing. The fir-trees and ship-yards and golden darics of the Mede were all at their service, but fleets are not built in a day. While they hewed and hammered and calked, we swept the Hellespont from sea to sea. Again the passing grain-ships paid us tribute; the soldiers were paid; the mouths of the poorest in Athens



were full of bread. King Agis still sat on his hill-top, but the citizens flouted at him from the walls. The envoys of Sparta stood at our gates asking peace, but such was our hope that we turned them back.



## XXXV.

### *An Entry and an Exit*

**B**UT for that one great sorrow of Gorgo's death, these years would have been among the sweetest of my life. Yet after the first keen shock, I sometimes wondered that my grief was not more bitter, — that I felt so little haste to die. And at another thing I wondered: I never seemed to feel her presence near me. I never saw her ghost in any dream; my sleeping spirit ranged the shadowland in vain. Awake, I could not think of her otherwise than as when she dwelt in Sparta.

For more than three years had slipped into memory since I had read those dreadful words that told me of her loss; and every month had brought some news of gain to Athens. The sea waves danced to our pipes and caressed our prows with foamy kisses; the enemy lurked in land-locked harbours, or stole watchfully from port to port. Even Byzantium had fallen at last, and I had sat as its governor, levying toll on its ever-flowing stream of laden ships. I had now returned to the city and had met great welcome.

The Five Thousand had justified my faith; never



was Athens happier than while they ruled. But who can hold a just balance in democracy? My plan had lapsed; I found the rabble in full dominance again. Yet for the present all went well.

One morning all the city swayed toward the port; the fleet of Alcibiades was making in. He stood on the deck as his ship neared the wharf, but drew back from the ladder. I had never seen him so nearly abashed.

"Come," I called — "hear how the people greet you."

"Gods!" he answered, "I can almost taste the hemlock in the air. Here is its native soil."

But the people shouted loudly, declaring him the saviour of Athens. One who stood near me attempted to utter another name, but a sturdy old cobbler smote him across the lips with much heartiness.

"He is none such, hark you. I think you be no good citizen to call him such, and corn at four for the obol, that had gone above the even obol."

It was not in the heart of Alcibiades to resist their acclamations long. His colour came back; he descended the ladder with the air of a conqueror. He swelled with pride and took a new view of himself as he marched to his home through a thunder of plaudits, — flung sneers at old opponents as he passed them, and began to sow promises broadcast among his friends. Yet when he reached the door, he stood still and almost wept.

"It has been eight years, Theramenes," he said,



— “eight years and more, since I passed the threshold.”

The next day he made a marvellous speech before the assembly, praising himself and denouncing his enemies until I trembled for him. But the populace applauded all and howled down every protesting voice. They voted him a hundred ships; they compelled the priests to fling into the sea the leaden tablets scored with curses.

“I wish they had not done that,” I said to Conon, who was to be his lieutenant. “It seems like casting them into the lap of the gods for fulfilment.”

“These things will always bear a double sense,” he answered. “We shall see.”

If indeed there was anything in Athens that Alcibiades feared, it was those priests of the mysteries; and when all was ready he held his forces a full month to escort their procession across the plain in defiance of the Spartans. Doubtless, too, it pleased him to vex Agis. Meanwhile he rioted after the old fashion; I could not restrain him.

“My very dissipations, splendid in their extravagance, are a glory to Athens,” he boasted. “Where else in Hellas will you find an Alcibiades? But it is lucky for the city that I was not made manifold—and lucky for me. I should kill myself off in parcels in quarrels with myself, if there were more of me. I myself could not tolerate such a fellow—but see how they abase themselves before me.”

“Have you heard who is now against you on the coast?” I asked him.



"The young Persian? That princeling, Cyrus? Yes, I know: he is pouring out his gold like a boy, and is daft for Sparta; but if once I can get words with him, that gold shall fall in my lap. The winsome youth will be an easier bargain than old Tissaphernes."

"Perhaps. But I mean Lysander."

"The new admiral? Another raw hand: I shall play with him. I wish you could be with me to see."

"You will find him more crafty than Sisyphus, and as savage as Cerberus, with a pride that exceeds your own." But I warned in vain.

"I remember him well. A fellow full of bluster, yet beaten by words in his own city. Even you, Theramenes, are more than a match for Lysander."

"If our captain were not so jealous of his trophies, I myself would deal with the bastard Spartan," swaggered Antipholus; for he ever trailed at the heel of his patron, — the flaunting flag of all his vices.

And all the world knows the outcome. While the general revelled on the shore, he left this drunken pilot in full control. With stringent injunctions? Of course — but a child might have known. The flushed fool must needs sail forth to taunt Lysander; the lion leaped and rent the fleet. Though the gods therein are just, it is little comfort that fools perish in their folly.

Then the people turned on Alcibiades and stripped him of command. It seems that every soul in



Athens had known that it was hopeless to trust Alcibiades. I pleaded, but only brought suspicion on myself. Then came a letter, brief and scratched in haste: —

*Son of Hagnon, this run of the dice is played: I have lost. I would curse the fellow, but he lies in mud already. It is myself. True, defeat never looks in my face — but what does it profit? So one in Athens warned me; do you know, Hagnonides, I never once went to him? I flee now to my castle by the Hellespont. You shall hear from me yet. I have learned facts of interest about this young Cyrus, who is Lysander's paymaster. He who rules at Sousa will wish to hear; you know the story of Themistocles. Call me henceforth Themistocles.*

*There is one thing yet. A certain Rhyzon is living in Ephesus; I was on his trail when this luck befell. And if Rhyzon — but why say more? The gods have wrought some miracle. Come to the coast when you may.*

Rhyzon lived! My soul rang like a bell that is struck. Yet I dared not hope; the gods are not so good. And even if the wretched miser lived — the rest was mere delusion! it could not be! And still — however wild the dream, I must know the utmost. I sought passage to Asia, but my father's mortal illness stayed me; he laid his trembling hands upon me and held me back.



All praise to the Spartan law! It served us well, then and often. The year of Lysander's command was out before he could work us further injury. His weapon was ready, his arm almost lifted to strike — and the laws of Sparta called him back. He obeyed, — but first he flung his weapon in the mud; he would not pass it cleanly to another. It was only nature, but the gain was ours.

Yet I think his successor a greater man than he. If ever Sparta had a hero, it was this Callicratidas; I except not even Gorgo's father, Brasidas, nor him who fell at Thermopylæ. He it was who scorned the contemptuous gold of Persia, — a grudging stipend flung to Hellas for smiting her own breast with brass. He it was who in his sternest need would make no fellow Greek a slave; who, had he lived, would have turned all spears against the Mede. He was our enemy, and I wrought my part to slay him; yet, as I view it now, his death was no less loss to Athens than to Sparta. He alone of the men of my time rose from loyalty to city to loyalty to Hellas.

Lysander had made all hard for him, but gods and men serve such as he when the spirit is manifest. Hard usage but proved his metal; it rang with eloquence and was edged with courage. Soon he rode at the head of a fleet that claimed the violet sea as its bride. So he warned us; our ships fled before him, yet even flight saved few; with a scanty remnant, Conon was locked in the harbour of Mytilene. One panting trireme bore the news to Athens.



We had lost Alcibiades, and already our case was desperate.

Say what you will of Athens and democracy, no other city ever had such power to rally; like Alcibiades himself, she was best at the worst. Faction was forgotten now; our only feud was with the enemy. Once more we asked our gods for gold, and they gave until their shrines lay bare. The plate from all our houses mingled in the melting-pot; it was disgrace for any to eat or drink from silver.

My father was dying, but he reared on his bed; his eyes flashed in their sunken sockets, and the lines of his face drew firm. "Hold nothing back," he said, "save what is in your mother's casket. Let all men see that Athens needs no traitor."

That casket and another I kept; Athena might give her jewels, but I would not part with Gorgo's. With the rest I did as my father bade; and while the applause to his name was still echoing across the market, he passed beyond the reach of any voice.

Meanwhile the timbers in the yards were framing themselves into ships as if Orpheus had played to them. In thirty days a hundred triremes floated in the harbour, and half as many more were gathered from other ports. Then the prison doors were thrown open; no man who would fight for his city any longer wore fetters. The slave who had grasped his freedom with the oar sat by the knight



who had leaped from his horse to the benches; none was too rich or too poor, none too good or too bad, to serve our need. I myself had command of a trireme, built and equipped from my father's estate.



## XXXVI.

### *The Greatest Battle Yet*

“**N**OW, Theramenes, it is once and all for Athens. This is the greatest sea-fight yet.” So Thrasybulus shouted back across the water from the line in front.

It was true; no eye that still drank light in Hellas had ever seen the like. Almost three hundred ships hung on the rolling swell in order of battle, with a stormy avenue extending far between their tossing beaks; oars and spears, not less than fifty thousand souls were afloat upon their planks; the opposing fronts were above twelve stades in length. The advantage of numbers was ours by a little, but the fleet of the enemy was much the better manned and drilled: so well did our generals know it that they ranged us double on each flank, while the foe, too confident, perhaps, but not without good warrant, bore down in one long line of outreaching fir and flashing prows.

For him who fights with triremes, motionless is weaponless; a moment more and we had overstayed our time. Our captains ended their exhortations shouting; with a shriek of the pipes we bowed upon



our oars and clutched the sea with triple banks, — twenty strokes and the rams were crashing. What followed none has ever truly told, nor ever may; it was like the meeting of the tides in the straits by Chalcis.

At first, indeed, we manœuvred with some attempt at concert; but in stubborn conflict amid a rising tempest all order was soon confounded. We struck as the waves would let us, now foiled, now swooping to the blow with terrific violence. I saw ships broken asunder by cleaving prows; others, shattered together, I saw sinking with commingled timbers, — and such was the fate of the galley that bore the pennant of Callicratidas, staunch and strong though it was, like the heart of him who wielded it.

This ship was the swiftest in his fleet, manned with his stoutest oars, and with his chosen comrades on its deck; it had wrought us much harm. I first perceived it on the summit of a billow, aiming at one of our Samians; I made toward them, but the sea baffled me, — my pilot was no Meletus. Again the Spartan rose on a crest, — he himself at the bow, a file of spears pressing behind him, ready to board at the moment of touch. Down the green slope they darted, but the Samian, much to my amazement, never swerved; with a cry to the oars she leaped like a water-snake, and met them with a shock so full on the prow that both rams burst inward, and the very cat-heads crashed together through the splintering planks. The spears fell



flat, like wheat before the sickle; the whole file was flung headlong, five over the bulwarks, their leader the foremost, — and the emerald flash of his helmet, as it sunk and wavered in the swaying waters, was the last that any ever saw of Callicratidas.

I have wondered since what may have been his thoughts as he thus lapsed down, sliding through liquid fathoms of twilight gloom, ever deepening, to darker night in the soundless gulfs below, — over-rolled by all the tumult of storm and battle, vanished and still in an instant! They were not of war, I fancy, nor of ships; the scene was changed. Indeed, it is much the same for us all when we sink into darkness. The soul paints its own pictures: perhaps he too had a Gorgo.

In that wild, bewildered conflict nothing seemed certain; we conquered here, and were foundering yonder. The whole field of the sea was full of driving beaks and heaving wrecks; the fight raged to the offing: yet the odds were slowly turning in our favour. The death of the admiral was noised above the storm, shouted from deck to deck; the enemy, dismayed, looked about them for their fleet, and saw few ships, some already in flight. We also gazed, and saw victory; we charged the more fiercely, two and three against one. They were fleeing now from all quarters, with our gathering squadrons hot in chase; of twice three score that had come against us, hardly two score saved their keels.



I started to follow, but my banks were crippled, and the drift of pitching oars and timbers so impeded us that we made small headway. That was not the worst: all along our course lay tilting wrecks, with raft-like decks almost awash, off which came cries to heaven which the wind snatched and bore elsewhere; then, beneath some toppling wave, the voices streamed in bubbles and the wind was freighted with souls. To most of these I gave little heed, — they were merciless enemies, paying the forfeit of defeat; but we, too, had met losses, and when the cries sounded in good Attic I could not pass without pause. The risk was great, for the sea was mounting; twice we struck down those whom we sought to save, and barely escaped their fate; it was only by bailing that we held afloat, but what could be done by one crew from a drunken hulk we did.

“These cries will presently echo in Athens,” I said to myself, as I listened. “A funeral victory, this. They are fewer now; I can do no more.”

But a hoarse call rose from the water, close by the stern: “God’s fire-fork, lads, heave a rope! Quick, lads, for the love of Athens and the craft!”

We dipped so low that I caught him by the arms and dragged him inboard as we lifted.

“You!” he gasped. “I am glad to owe you a life.” He sat on the deck, spitting water. “A flagon, lad, and I shall owe you another. I have been in the drench of Styx.”

By luck I found what he wanted. “I shall get



small good of it, lad," he said, sombrely, laying down the empty leather. "Three days in the shop of the Chalcidian will scarcely mellow the tides I have gulped. Not since the casting away of Odysseus, lad, has any been so washed of wine and life. I cannot conceive how those fishes endure it."

"Meletus," I cried, "the sight of you is wine to me. Leave the fishes to their brine, and tell me all."

"I have left them less of it than I would, lad," he answered, with a faint leer, — "though it may well chance that in this Pontus which I have engulfed there is a due portion of fishes. But all is this: for lack of better I sailed upon a meal-tub, which proved a tub indeed, and a weary leg an ill sweep for its steering; and when at length I had swallowed such portion of the tempest as the gods ordained, I was borne to your hand for rescue. The rest, I have hope, will be a manner of ebbing of the tide."

"But how were you wrecked — you, Meletus?"

"How? It is well asked, lad. It was a sheer betrayal of good timbers, a treason, as it were, to the craft, for which I am rightly crusted with salt. Lad, I have swung the sweeps all my life, yet knew not that the element on which we sail was so evil and insistent of flavour."

"They shall find another flagon. Go on."

"Bid them keep the neck of it close strapped, lest brine enter. Well, the fellow was making havoc, and I thought, 'It is an ill deed, but the man is



worth it.' I could not deal with him otherwise, because of that Hermon, who was a very sufficient pilot. He was of Megara, and I would rank him above yonder Ariston, whose bones — ”

“Peace to the pilots! Of whom do you speak?”

“Of Hermon, whose bones — ”

“No, but the other?”

“Rest by Styx. Yet I grant you that Hermon had the better of me, for Styx, being of the nature of a river and less brackish — ”

“They shall mingle the wine.”

“Nay, lad, I will mingle it,” he cried, rising to seize the flask. “I still can feel the fishes bump within me, but I mend, and the sweeter liquid may yet pervade the mass. It was of the admiral I was speaking when you threatened me — him they call Callicras, or some such gay-headed name. I observed that he stood far to fore, with his legs wide strided, thus — or it might be with something more of steadiness, as not having drunk of brine. He had forgot he was on the sea, it is likely — no Spartan ever remembers. I had Samians, mark you, and I deemed he was worth them all. I betrayed them, lad, most treasonably, striking keel to keel, which none expected, and as we shut together it pleased me to see him dive for it. Yet Meletus, too, would have gone groping for purple oysters but for the chance of the meal-tub, which I hugged with more affection than I knew was in my heart.”

“And the Samians?”



“They gave me ill words, lad, as they foundered; but I bade them wait by Styx and I would get them over. They will be impatient, I surmise, but it was not my meaning to mislead them, for I had then no better thought than to join them quite hastily. If I am foresworn to them I might blame you, lad, but the wine mends all; and if you will pluck yon bath-master off the sweeps, I will bring you to land, which is out of all likelihood as we are pointing.”

I gave him the sweeps. The sky was dark with clouds and the fall of night. The whole field of battle with its huddled wrack had drifted many leagues, and we upon it. The broken hulks were gone or silent.

“How many do you think have perished?” I asked, suddenly.

“Well, lad, accounting for enemies and slaves and foreigners, not omitting the Samians — who died in a good cause, mind you, though ungraciously — all told, I would estimate —”

“Not those, but of our citizens — native born?”

“Citizens? They are not so many as formerly; all manner of two-legged things were on the benches. But of those, rich and poor and such as thrive by their wits, I would say upward of a thousand.”

“A thousand citizens, Meletus, lost from a wasted city!”

“The death of some of them will be a saving of lives, lad.”



"No, Meletus, those are they who remain; or, if any such are beneath the sea, their shades will be more deadly than ever were their tongues."

"I would think you have the right of it, lad."

"And we alone have sought to rescue them! Not another ship turned back."

"May the gods of fair weather blow on your sails for it, lad; Meletus would else have died a slow death by breaking on the tub. But as to there being no others, though my eyes are yet bleared with the swash, I seem to descry a hull to northward with motion of its own. Cliffs of Cocytus, lad! you lack direction. Yonder is southward."

It was long before I could make out anything, but after a time I heard the plash and creak of oars, and a trireme showed in the mist, laden with men.

"What ship?" came a hail — and I knew the voice.

"*Soteria*, of Athens," bawled Meletus.

"Are you calling for help?"

"Meletus pilot, trierarch Theramenes," he continued, with a note of scorn. "Shall we take you in tow?"

"Thrasybulus!" I shouted. "The gods be thanked that we both are here!" And soon we were standing by, as near as we dared bring the oars.

"You, too, have been gleaning lives," he cried, joyfully. "I might have known, for it is like you. Yet I thought you had gone with the rest."

"Which way, Thrasybulus?"



“Down, I almost hoped. In the chase, as I feared. They are crazy, or worse, to make idle pursuit with this behind, — yet I myself ran with them half a league before I thought to turn. We can do no more, and ‘which way?’ is indeed the question. Is that Meletus, who, they say, sunk Hermon?”

“The very Meletus,” broke in that much mollified pilot, “and there is a question well answered. It is all in the gift of direction. You were pointed for Egypt, lad, whither I sail not, — but hold after Meletus, and he will bring you in.”

“Over Styx?” I asked, doubtfully; for such was the present aspect.

“To the camp, lad. They have put to shore and started fires, for I sense some waft of smoke.”

So we started together, beating against the gale with weary oars; but storm and fog and gloom soon parted us, for we had no lights. With a lull of the wind came rain, yet the roll of the sea did not abate; I stood on the fore deck, full of dread, vainly peering into the night.

Then something loomed like a blot on the darkness, but as we crashed upon it Jove’s sudden fire-bolt lighted all. The deck of a foundered merchantman lay low, full of leaping shapes, — yet I seemed to see but one. Night shut again, but even through the crackling thunder I heard her cry:

“Theramnas!”



## XXXVII.

### *At Last*

“GORGGO!”

There were other cries, no few, a rending of wood amid the roar of waves, and over all the pealing thunder; yet our voices met and kissed in the darkness, as if alone. I leaped blindly, felt beneath me the shudder of planks, and, as the sky again opened, darted forward. She sprang into my arms, unseen: not an instant was lost in words; I staggered back to where our prow was grinding, guided by sound. Still another flash showed Meletus leaning from the bow, whither, leaving his helpers, he had run at the shock; with all my force I cast her into his receding arms by its gleam, then leaped through night. My fingers caught, slipped, yet held; I struggled up over the bulwarks, and fell against Meletus.

“Gods! did you make it, lad? I have fast that you sent me, but by the burning of Phlegethon, I am blinded. It came up in my face like red fire through the lightning; I winced, lad, but what I found in my arms seemed soft and lovesome, like a maid. Yet I doubt of the essence, lad, and would



bid you have care what manner of being you take from the sea by night. I have seen those little black dæmons running about the deck in late watches, but I never before saw fire-sprite, and know not what it portends."

"Joy," I said, with a full heart.

"Theramnas," a soft voice murmured, "will you not take this maid quickly and for always?"

"Have it so if you will, lad," he said, with some asperity, "but I doubt the manner of the essence; if it burns not may the fire-fork cleave to my tongue. The voice it gives forth is like the sweet drip of the flagon, but you have heard of those Sirens. I have known of a good bark cracked in open sea and fair weather on a witchery of floating rocks for less."

"Oh, Theramnas!" she cried, between laughing and sobbing.

Again we ground against the wreck; with a scramble about the prow dark forms rose and passed us.

"We are taking on dead men in my view of it," growled the pilot, "and I like not the breed."

"Back to your sweeps, and that quickly, or those whom you left there may fulfil the worst without aid of floating stones."

"And that is a timely word, lad. If those thalamites send us not to Acheron with unseasonable ramming, they will head again for Egypt." He sniffed and listened — "Yea, lad, it is so they are pointing" — and ran sternward.



I sat upon the deck with Gorgo in my arms. Rain was still falling; the soft, warm drops beat in our faces, mingled with dashes of spray, but we did not heed. The lightning flashes, less frequent now, showed but a narrow circle of black billows, yet we scarcely saw even that; our eyes were not on the sea in those precious moments. But what need of light? After all those years of waiting, of struggle and peril and barriers that neither love nor courage could surmount, Gorgo lay in my arms; she whom I had mourned as dead, my dream, the spirit my soul had sought in vain, — she lay on my breast with pulsing heart and warm arms locked about my neck, breathing sighs of perfect rest. The rain! the storm! what of them? Death itself! what would it matter?

“Nothing, Gorgo, nothing shall ever part us now,” I whispered.

“O boy” — she laughed, softly — “I am glad you are not a boy, but a man. And that is because I love you, all and all, and every morsel of me and my very soul is to you. I did not truly love before — or it seems so. I was almost afraid; but now — Theramnas” — and more than all her breathless syllables the sinking of her cheek upon my shoulder told me.

What *I* said *she* would know, but I know not. It is what *she* said that lingers like remembered music in my heart. I have loved the silence, that I might listen to it.

“O Theramnas” — it scarcely seemed a sound,



our souls were so near — “it has been so terrible without you, — more terrible than ever I can tell. There is none that is good and true but you, Theramnas — whose bride this happy Gorgo is, and whose glad wife she shall always be, so long as there is any Gorgo anywhere. Do you see? I can say it, and love to say it, now. And now you might slay Lysander or any other — and Golas shall shoot as you bid — only keep this Gorgo. She has had a knife hid in her bosom, but she never will need it now.” And she loosed her arms for a moment to fling it from her.

Then, after a long time spent in sweeter questionings, —

“Where is Rhyzon?” I asked. For I thought of him not unkindly in my joy.

She, shrunk in my arms. “You shall not speak of him, Theramnas. He was on that ship; I do not know. I would almost wish he was drowned.”

“Drowned, Gorgo!”

“It would be better so. When men are grown so wicked it is not good that they live; yet if he be truly my father’s brother, you cannot strike him with your sword. For I think — he so loved gold — oh, Theramnas! I cannot. I will not have that Rhyzon in this hour.”

I felt a foam in my throat. “He shall hold an accounting with the house of Hagnon, not of silver.”

“Yes,” she said earnestly, “but not of blood, neither. Boy, boy! the gods may kill him, but not



you. I had kept that knife for Gorgo — but see! she is here and all for you. Oh, thank the gods, Theramnas! and speak no more of Rhyzon this night.”

At last the fires of the camp glinted and twinkled through the surge, soon rising clear; we grounded smoothly on the island beach, and stayed the stern with anchors. The generals were sitting in council; I had scarcely leaped to land when they summoned me before them. It was hard, but I dared not delay. Gorgo I left with Meletus, trusting no other.

“Guard with your life, and drink as mildly as you may,” I exhorted him.

“There is a manner of rats in the hold,” he said, sulkily.

“See that you keep them there: let none go or come. But above all, guard —”

“The fire-sprite? That spell is strong upon you, lad. Well — I owe you a life — but I like not the essence.”

But Meletus too came under the spell when he looked on Gorgo. “I was mistaken in the element, lad,” he exclaimed loudly. “It is of wine, not fire — or it might be of that nectar wherewith Father Jove, they say, is wont to steady his legs when he would heave thunder, but I know not the tang of it. Not but here is fire, too, — yet only as of the wine, a sparkle, as it were, of sweet and comfortable fieriness. I will guard her, lad, if it brings me to the swimming of Phlegethon.”



I found the generals in angry debate. "It has been a capital mistake," Diomedon was saying as I approached. "You are all my witnesses that I cried out against it and strove to call you back."

I paused in the shadow to listen. "It will be a capital mistake for you, if you turn upon us," retorted a wheezing voice. It was Erasinides — whom I detested. If you have seen a toad you have seen Erasinides.

"By this reckless, fruitless folly we have missed the saving of I dare not think how many lives," persisted Diomedon, "and I maintain that even now —"

"Beware lest you prove to be the one we deputed for that very purpose," sneered Erasinides.

"We might have done both had you heeded my words as we gathered," blustered Thrasyllus. "There were ships enough for chase and rescue too."

"Perhaps we did heed that good advice," snuffed the voice I hated. "Perhaps it was you we deputed. Friends, we have only to agree and make a choice. I think we sent back Thrasyllus with thirty ships, — or was it Diomedon?"

"The god's curse upon you," gasped Thrasyllus, "a common trierarch will serve if that is the turn, — or a pair of them."

"A lie must at least be plausible," protested Diomedon. He also was pale. "As for me, gods and men saw me, that I was with the rest of you."

"Yes, we must be plausible," assented Erasinides.



“It is better, doubtless, to choose beyond our own number, since we are at one. I think Theramenes was not seen with us, — the very man. Thrasybulus, too, turned back, — another. They were both deputed with ample commission, but the storm daunted them. They will plead the storm, of course, before the people, but that is their own affair.”

“Why not blame all on the storm?” exclaimed young Pericles, eagerly. “Why mention names? We may say in our dispatches that the storm prevented. It is enough, and this is dastardly.”

At that I strode among them. “Dastardly it is,” I cried; “and dastardly it was to leave sinking comrades. The lie is well devised, but its edge shall be turned.”

“Theramenes, we are rejoiced to see you,” puffed the swelling toad. “We feared you were lost. You remember, doubtless, the strict injunction we laid upon you, — to return in haste with three ships out of each squadron? We trust you have obeyed in every particular, lest we find it our unwilling duty to report you. Did you rescue many?”

“Enough to bear me witness,” I answered, shortly.

Consternation was in their faces. Young Pericles leaped to his feet. “We shall lay the blame on nothing else but the storm. Stand with us, Theramenes.”

“Aye, meet a storm with a storm; two storms will perhaps bring a calm. Stand with you? It is



late thought of and suddenly suggested, — I will reflect upon it at some leisure."

“Lies or truth, I will take no such chances before a mad mob,” exclaimed Protomachus. “It is to throttle a she-wolf whining over dead whelps. I am straight for Thrace.” And he left the assembly.

I also slipped away in the confusion, hastening to my ship. The black sky had grown gray, but the earth still lay in shadow and the camp-fires smouldered low.

“She is safe, lad,” Meletus greeted me, “and I think it is but a lass when all is said, though, as it were, flamesome beyond any; yet in my view of it in some sort lacking in decorum, lad, for when I sought to counsel with her — and soberly, mind you — of this notable rashness of trusting to a heady youth, she laughed out upon me, lad, like one in wine.”

“Push off and make speed with silent pipes,” I interrupted. “Steer for Athens, and let none pass us.”



## XXXVIII.

### *The Last Hiss of the Snake*

AS the little islands sunk behind us we met Thrasybulus slowly beating in; he had wandered all night on the sea. When I told him of that council on the beach, he wheeled his ship.

“The scoundrels!” he broke forth. “Then I am also for Athens, Theramenes. With the cargo we bear I think we shall match them — we two.” We both sighed at the thought of a third. “We must provision as we can at Psyra; I am deeply laden, and we are athirst and unfed.”

“Yea, and let us have on some manner of lights,” called Meletus, “lest you weave another fish-net in the darkness. Yet in my way of thinking, a professing pilot who cannot follow guidance on a plain course should sail on Charon’s ferry.”

But the mind of Thrasybulus still lingered on the council, and his anger grew. “The scoundrels!” he again broke forth. “We were to be their scape-goats, Theramenes — we who saved! Do you see? We were to have their shame and drink their hemlock who strove to save while they sat about the



fire and plotted this! Even Thrasyllus! Do you know, Theramenes, I would have trusted that man with my life?"

"In battle you well might," I answered, "but not in council."

"A good democrat too! We wrought together hand in hand at Samos, Theramenes: I account him now no better than an oligarch. And Diomedon — so brave a soldier!"

"Yes, in the hot flush of the fight. But his heart chilled at the hemlock."

"It is a chilly word, Theramenes; yet sooner than betray I would take the cup. But the dregs of another's infamy I will not drain. The scoundrels! oh, the scoundrels! They shall have their own."

At Psyra I gave the seamen a portion of their wages, and the rest three obols each to buy food. While they were stripping the markets I sat beside Gorgo, and drawing her pearls from my bosom slipped them upon her wrist. "So I will bear them with me henceforth," I said.

"Oh! and have you those?" she said, blushing.

"But why did you not ask me for them, Gorgo?"

"And indeed, Theramnes, you are seeking to remind this maid of a very foolish thing that she would willingly forget altogether. Yet in Athens she might, perhaps, have asked — in Hagnon's house, and sitting thus beside you. For you told her, Theramnes, on that foolish, dreadful day, that her pearls were in Athens and there she should have them."



“And so it was upon that day, and she shall have them there, yet need not wait. For since that day they have ever been with me, Gorgo, and never at any hour would you have asked in vain.”

“And is not this maid glad to see them? Surely you would not think that I did not ask because I did not care, Theramnas. It was for very shame that I did not ask; and I shall ever be reminded by them of that dark hut that is like an evil dream, and the door you set up, all broken and rickety, to shut away the badness of Gorgo. Yet you bore my pearls — and in battle, Theramnas — or would you leave them in your tent? For how ever could you carry them — under your corselet, Theramnas?”

“I wear no corselet on shipboard, but bear a shield,” I answered, quickly. “Now laugh, Gorgo, if you will, for the laugh is sweet to hear and I mind not. But as to what was spoken in the helot’s hut, may we not account that even and the counters swept from the board and no more words?”

“I would be the gainer, I think. Yet you swore that day, Theramnas, more fearfully than any that I ever heard, — unless it would be this wonderful pilot you have, who has told me that by a certain fire-fork you are a staunch comrade, and but for a certain vexation of horses in your wine as sufficient a seaman as ever pranced on pine save one, yet by Sesostris and Isis in the matter of lasses a perilous lad and rash of oaths. That, he said, was his view of it. Is it so, Theramnas?” And we laughed together.



“ See,” she exclaimed, holding up her wrist, “ that is true which they say. The pearls are grown more lustrous by sleeping close to the heart.”

“ But, Gorgo, where are the rest? Even those dimples of the ears are empty, and no Lycurgus near to trouble you.”

“ He sold them from me, Theramnas, — the pearls of my ears and all the jewels of my mother he sold for darics and staters, and scarcely gave this Gorgo bread. Yet some of the pearls I gave those who were to carry letters, which made him angry; and I knew that he had stopped the letters, for you did not come.”

“ Rhyzon denied you bread!”

“ And Gorgo herself he would have sold at last, to Lysander. He had bargained for it, Theramnas; but I made him understand that Lysander would pay him no gold for a dead Gorgo. Then, after Lysander was gone, he said we would go to Athens, and you, perhaps, would give him gold. And I went so willingly — but Theramnas, I think it was all a lie, to draw me into the ship. For that ship was loaded with slaves, and on it was a terrible, little old man, all yellow and shrunk, with a turban wound low on his forehead, — and I fear — oh! Theramnas — I feared — ”

“ A little yellow old man,” I almost screamed, “ with a turban?”

But screams of another sort were rising from the wharf, and above them the roar of Meletus: “ God’s fork! I have those rats, lad, two of them.”



I ran to the bow. Meletus held his captives by the throat, one in each hand, shaking them as if they were rats indeed.

"They were scuttling ashore, lad," he said, "and one, I would surmise, I have had some previous dealings with. For if that furled sail-cloth of his be not a manner of stable for the nag Meletus gave him off Leucadia, may the —"

"Bring them up," I commanded. "I know them, both."

For one was Rhyzon, gaunt and sordid; as he saw me standing by Gorgo, his jaw shook, but he could not speak.

"Cast him in chains below," I said. "His reckoning comes later. As for that other —"

Meletus snatched away the turban: the branded outline of a horse appeared in hideous mottle on his brow.

"Cast him presently to the sharks."

"It is well conceived, lad. And while he waits the coming of his kind the brine will cool his brow."

The base wretch cowered at my feet. "Oh, no! oh, no! It shall be ransom, noble son of Hagnon. Yes, it shall be a ransom of much gold, of the amber gold, which shall much restore the noble master's house."

"When the sharks have eaten you we will then discuss the ransom if you like," I said.

"O Apollon! O noble son of Apollon! Surely the noble prince of his country will spare the old merchant who has suffered such a dreadful usage. He



will heed the good sophist; he will not kill. He will take the rich ransom. The old merchant has done ill, but he has suffered such punishment."

"Pray to Bel, not to me."

"He is so far; he is not of Greece. You shall have Golas. The old merchant will restore to you Golas. For he knows the place. Yes, Golas."

I paused at that, and looked hard in his face. "You can restore to me Golas?"

"I swear by Bel, and by Apollon, and by Moloch. You shall have him — Golas. But you must set the poor old merchant free."

"Where is he, then? I would not trust you a handbreadth."

"I will not tell you that: I will not tell it on the fire. But you shall take the old merchant to Athens, and when you have sworn he will bring you to Golas."

"I will swear sooner to rend you with torments than free you, if you lead me merely to his bones."

"No, no! Not that — but alive. Not dead nor spoiled, but a good slave. Why should the merchant spoil a good slave? You will take Golas, and then set the merchant free. You will swear — by Apollon?"

"Cast the Syrian also in chains below, — and clench well his irons. If his promise holds he shall go, unharmed — by me."

It was late on the third day when we reached Piræus, for our galleys dragged and our banks were ill-oared. We found the whole city rejoicing, for the



*Paralus* had already arrived, bringing the news of victory. There was little else in the dispatches, — some mention of the storm, less of wrecks, and none whatever of me, as I soon made certain; for the time, at least, the caution of young Pericles had prevailed. Yet with the official letters others had come of a different tenor. I felt myself assailed by hard looks shot from gloomy eyes: of my friends some avoided me; others spoke, but with deep reserve. I was under suspicion; the toad had croaked; he was having his way after all, — but in their open dispatches they had chosen to be kind to me, forsooth!

“Oh! this is dastardly,” said Thrasybulus, echoing the words of Pericles. “They have filled the city with lying rumours.”

At length I was called before the senate and put under examination. The faces were flinty at first, and the questionings harsh; but I told the full truth, bringing witnesses, and Thrasybulus stood by me, sputtering with rage, loyal as a brother. The case was dismissed: the senators gathered about me in murmuring groups, grasping my hand, many walking with me through the market. On the street the change was no less; the sad and bitter faces were no fewer there, but the blight of their gaze was no longer turned on me. Other voices had spoken; the men who owed us life were spreading rumours now.

I myself have been blamed for crafty courses. I know it only too well — judge not yet. But the



craft that is blood-splashed and soaked with lies is a path of slime along a precipice. Not even he who goes unwilling, with slow steps, may hold his feet upon it, — that too I have learned. Diomedon was to learn it; and Thrasyllus; even young Pericles. Perhaps Socrates spoke true, and wrong is never right.

The people met on the Pnyx, — an assembly full of mourners and those in dreadful doubt. The generals were summoned back. There was as yet no turbulence: Thrasybulus spoke briefly; I said not a word. I went home to Gorgo.

“See,” she said, “we are even sitting together in the house of Hagnon. And there are here no Ephors. Yet I have no jewels but these.”

“Wait a little,” I answered. “Only my wife may wear those jewels I shall give to Gorgo.”

“And gladly will I wait, Theramnas; I did but wish to be beautiful in your father’s house. But I would wish your wife the most beautiful of all, Theramnas; I will have no wife in Athens so beautiful as she — that Ionian Gorgo, whom they drove from Sparta — nor any so glad altogether. She shall much surpass this maid.”

“How ever can you be more beautiful, Gorgo?”

“You shall see,” she cried, “you shall see, Theramnas.”

Rhyzon I had loosed from his fetters, but held him under strict guard. The Syrian still lay in chains, flung in a dark store-room, groaning and cursing as he rolled upon the floor, yet begging ab-



jectly if any came near. I now had him out; he could scarcely stand.

"Lead," I said, "and bring me to Golas."

"Oh, Bel!" he chattered. "Not without oath — not if the son of Apollon should crucify. He shall swear by his own Apollon."

And Apollo — who had seen his deeds — I made my witness. I swore that when he had fulfilled his promise I would neither harm nor hinder further.

"We must have the oars — a six strong oars, for it is far. And the noble Athenian will surely keep his oath, else Apollon will greatly torment him. The place — it is at the Laureion."

The mines! But I assured him I would stand by my oath.

I hired a boat and we coasted down; it was nearly noon when we landed at the dock, pressing in between the moored barges. The place was strongly garrisoned, but the captain knew and passed me.

"The noble Athenian who has sworn an oath will ask for Sosias," said the Syrian. "It will be necessary to speak with Sosias. He is of Thrace; he was tasker of the slaves for Nicias — it is now his son."

The fellow was called, — a man built like a bull, red-haired, with a flavour of raw wine about him. He was surly at first, but the gleam of a daric mended his aspect.

"You mean to pay? For two minas you may have any here. Their cost is a mina on the market, but I must make good my count and have my profit. It is a dog's task and a rotten lot; they last no better



than a catch of fish in the sun. Here since when, say you? By Deus, he will be but a carcass; they endure not so long. Strong, say you? The smoke of the smelt would blast Hercules; we change them about, but the breath of the pit is not so much better. Still, for this daric I will make search; it is beside the price, take notice, for the trouble is much and the finding unlikely. I have under me above a thousand — or had at the last numbering. The name — it is no help. They have no names; they go by count. But we will have up the oldest of the pack."

The Syrian whispered in his ear. "Him, merchant? The silent one? Deus! I had almost forgot that one. He may yet be hacking; he was so strong that we kept him from the furnace for the pit. We may find that one: if he were newer you should scarcely have him for two minas; but he will be a mere rag, and the word is passed."

So we climbed by a deep-rutted road into such a region of death as I think was never elsewhere; even in the sunless realm of Hades, there can be no place more hideous. The whole mountain was blasted as if by a curse — no weed was vile enough to live amid such fumes as wafted there — and all over its broken slopes were scattered the furnaces, glowing below and reeking from their summits, whose black breath was its desolation. These smoke streams coiled and writhed in the air like dragons, and were as rank with poison.

"But for this lift of the wind I would not venture



up myself," remarked Sosias, looking about uneasily. "If you see me take a run, hold close."

On all sides were branching paths, each leading to a furnace or a pit; for the pits were many, and led —

"Near twenty stades into Hades' own country, some of them," explained the Thracian. "They say you can hear the boiling of Phlegethon in the deepest."

We had paused before a perilous flight of stone steps, leading steeply down into darkness. "Will you go in, or wait?" he asked.

"We will go in." And I thrust the Syrian before me.

Sosias called: two weird creatures came up with torches, their faces goat-like, with matted hair and beard. We followed them through avenues of stone and buttressed chambers, I dare not say how far, amid shapes that might be ghost or dæmon.

"O Bel, O Bel, have pity," groaned the Syrian. "Thou shalt have captives; thy altars shall drip."

At last we paused where the iron was ringing. "They say he is here," said Sosias, pointing in at a dusky opening.

"Golas!" I called — "Golas!"

The great bar that we had heard churning against the rock clanged on the floor. A wild and naked thing rushed forth like a spectre; it lay at my feet, and I felt the rough cheek rubbing against the thongs of my sandal.

"Speak, Golas. It is I."



Sosias laughed. "He can ill do that; the tongue is cut. Nay, I did it not: what use? So he came to me."

"It is not a harm; it does not spoil," clamoured the Syrian. "It is a good slave — yes, sound, and still so strong; he will obey the better for the cutting of the tongue."

I choked. Then, turning to Sosias, "Would you trade for this Syrian?"

"Pan! He is not worth bread." And again the fellow laughed.

"Nor would I sell. It is but a jest. I am in the humour for jesting, Syrian. Why do you sweat so?"

"Apollon! There shall be no jest; it is an oath. Will you have upon you the curse of Apollon?"

"Not I. The oath shall be kept — to the very letter, like the Syrian's promise."

"I think I smell sport," said Sosias. "But mind, I must have the two minas. No jesting there; for the rest, command me."

"Rise, Golas," I said. And — though it was a strange thing for Hagnon's son to do — I put my arms about his neck. He caught me up on his shaggy breast, and in spite of remonstrance bore me so all the way to the light; while Sosias, I observed, kept sharp watch on the Syrian. At length we were again by the boat, and the master of the mines had his pay. The Syrian quivered with hope and fear and weakness; his state was pitiable, — had he been other than he was.



"The good youth will keep his oath," he said, from a parched throat.

"He will keep his oath — but no haste. Where is the bow?"

"I do not know that — I cannot tell. It was not bargained."

"No: but you burnt it, perhaps, before the eyes of him who stands speechless?"

"The bow? I do not know." His eyes wavered. "Who would dare to deal with Golas while there was yet the bow? It is gone. The Syrian does not know."

"The slave was a good archer?" asked Sosias, with interest. "It is shame to cast such in the mines. If you wish me to take up that Syrian beast — but at no price, mind — and I see he is already branded —"

"May you burn in Moloch — yes, all. It is a treachery; you will not keep the oath."

He flashed at me with a little dirk, long and thin, like a spindle. How he got it I cannot imagine, but I foiled him as if he had been a child with a straw.

"Foul offspring of Bel and Moloch," I cried, in a voice which I could control no longer, "do you think to lie and murder and betray, and still to bind others by oaths, and by oaths to the gods to evade the vengeance of gods and men? I have sworn — and much may it profit you! I will keep all oaths and pay all debts — mark me, Syrian. Go! the hour is come, and I have sworn not to hinder. Do you



understand me, Golas? The man goes free, and you are free, — and I have sworn not to hinder.”

The eyes of the slave sought mine, lifted in savage exultation; the Syrian sunk in a helpless sweat of terror; from both throats issued a gurgle.

“Only not here,” I said to Golas.

He crouched like a panther and leaped upon the Syrian’s neck, flung him over his shoulder, and in such fashion bore him up the hill. Golas had waited long. He had now no bow — but he had his hands: how he used them was never asked and could never be told. And so, no doubt, it was well to leave it — untold; for Golas was not a follower of Socrates, nor even a Greek, but a barbarian. He was gone a long while, and when he returned he again kissed my feet.



## XXXIX.

### *A Voice from a Meal - Tub*

THE assembly met; the generals stood before the people. From the prison they came, and stood with pallid cheeks and flinching eyes before white-haired fathers grieving for their sons. I noted that Erasinides was chewing on nothing and working his throat; the face of young Pericles was like wetted linen. Would they dare to boast of the victory before these? Or the storm — would that serve? They looked down and met the gaze of those whom others had drawn from its billowy lips, — in whose ears still rang the cries of drowning comrades. It was not a kindly gaze.

They were daunted; the low muttering roar of that assembly was more daunting than any storm. Battles must needs cost lives: it had seemed so easy to explain, — on the little isles of Arginusæ. Lying, too, seems so easy — yet may grow so deadly hard. They had not fared happily before the senate; their words had been heard with impatience. The senate, indeed, had commanded me to appear against them, bringing my witnesses.

“You have made grave charges,” I was admonished. “We believe you, and have held these men



for trial; but you must bear us out. Besides, they will certainly turn the blame on you, and you must be ready." Thrasybulus was warned in like terms.

I told the main facts very simply. I would not enlarge upon them; the mood of the people was dangerous. Thrasybulus spoke more hotly, with a convincing heartiness of anger. The assembly surged, but there was still no outbreak.

After this the trick of magnanimity seemed wisest. Erasinides answered first and gave them the cue. They made no open charges, — these good friends of mine; they had wished — they still wished — to spare me. They contradicted me mildly: the duty had indeed been assigned me, with ample powers, but doubtless the storm was a sufficient reason why I had done so little. Perhaps they had been unfortunate in their choice, but I was accounted a competent officer, and Thrasybulus no less. They deemed our conduct fairly excusable, and therefore had not mentioned the matter in their dispatches. That, perhaps, was an error, — and they looked at me reproachfully. Thus they spoke, each in turn, all to the same effect and with an air of great moderation.

It was a good play; there were really some who believed them. Others clamoured for witnesses, — and I sent up Meletus. He stood on the bema swaying a little, his legs set rather wider than was needful, surveying that sea of upturned faces as one who would catch the drift of the weather, but perfectly cool.



“What? Meletus the poet?” exclaimed a senator when the name was announced.

“Well, my lad, it may be there is a manner of poesy in piloting, as it were. The roll of a heavy swell is most like those hexameters, I would say, and the whine of the wind has a certain likeness to the manner of reciting them by those rhapsodists. Yes, lad, I would conceive it is somewhat of that nature; for in my present view of it the jogging push of the oars is much like the running of those courses of speech to the tune of the pipes in the theatre, and a storm at sea, I would think, is something after the fashion of their choruses. But, mark you, I lay no positive claim to the craft of poesy, old lad — and you need not bring in the lyre for Meletus,” he concluded, eying him sharply.

“It is he who expounded the Gorgon’s letter,” shouted the crowd. “Let us hear the pilot.” And some began to laugh, though others scowled.

“Peace,” said the president. “Forbear your harping, Meletus, and tell the people of the storm.”

“Well, lads,” he said, squaring about, “it blew straight down from the Hellespont, and came mainly in long rolls. But mark you, I had no fair view of it. From the deck I accounted it no great storm for a ship well manned and piloted — though I may have spraddled a bit for better steadiness, as you may see is my wont in uncertain weather; but on that merchantman, as it were, of a meal-tub, spinning about with no adequate steerage and a swash like Phlegethon — ”



“You were saved on a meal-tub?”

“Nay, lads, unless you would account that salvation which Apollo did to Marsyas — to be skinned alive and whipped with brine. I was saved from the meal-tub, as I would judge the matter, by a hand-lift of this staunch lad, whom I presently steered in, with such others as he had taken up, to join the generals at their wine. It was but one good turn for another, — and a sharp turn, too, as he was headed, — a good lad, mind you, though lacking direction. But as for the storm, I thought it an ill storm from the tub, yet found it much abated by a hasty swallowing of the rougher part.”

“But the wrecks — what of them?”

“Very little of them after I had parted with the tub, lads. But while I was dancing the cordax on that bucket, the hulks were dancing with me, — yet not altogether so merrily. They lay awash with all hands on deck, as the manner is on a wreck, heavy freighted and spilling off cargo, more or less, at each dip; and the manner of speaking of those lads, mark you, would have grieved Nicias. It was of the generals they were speaking mainly, as I judged it, and by the howling at Styx, it was not in the nature of good discipline. I reproved them for it, lads, as best I might between gulplings of that Lesbian brine; from a better craft I think it likely I might have found them more adequate terms, but my heart was with them, lads, and they were mostly weeping. It was they who had won the victory, in their own conceit of it. They bade me tell you of these things



in case the tub should prove seaworthy, but I had little thought to see you then, and counselled them to await me beside the fall of Phlegethon, where I would join them, and the generals soon after, it was likely, when a dip in that stream might do them benefit, as coming chilled with the hemlock, — for I made sure, lads, they would have the hemlock after their wine. But as I now recall it, I would think it possible I spoke in extremity of ill-humour; for this word I gave them from a meal-tub, mind you, with the swash of the sea in my throat, and a manner of suddenness in the rise and fall of it not favourable to considerateness of speech, and the cry of those drowning lads in my ears as often as the water ran out. I have thought since that it was in a manner excusable, as they say, for I myself would sooner have sat ashore drinking good wine and devising with yon Erasinides to cast the blame on others, than to be thus bobbing about and choking the hold with such a dismaying swill of bilge, listening the while to words so ill of omen. Yet in my present view those lads are still waiting yonder, and I would not wonder if they were disappointed out of all reason, for I could see they were mightily taken with the notion of it. I would not like to be the one to explain it to them, lads.”

When he began to speak men were slapping each other on the back and chuckling with mirth; the silence now was portentous. The dusk was deepening fast, and with that and the gloom of their looks they seemed an assembly of Nubians. Not an orator



lifted his voice: those foundering wrecks were before all eyes, those despairing cries filled all ears, the whisper of angry ghosts was in every heart. At last —

“Let the senate prepare articles of impeachment,” said the president, “and determine the order of trial, under approval of the next assembly. Is this your will?”

So it was voted, as if with one voice; but for three days nothing further could be done because of the festival season. A dismal festival it proved that year, — yet it was not so to me.

“It is the Apaturia,” I said to Gorgo. “Now, all through Athens, the clans are numbered, and kinsmen greet, and those of the same blood banquet together. Now babes are christened, and every family gathers to salute its own; and now shall Gorgo be wed, and made the mistress of my house.”

And she said: “I have no kin, Theramnas, nor country, nor anything but you, and am yours altogether. And I bring no other dower, Theramnas, but all this Gorgo is she gives you utterly, forever and forever; and gladly will she call the gods to witness of that truth in any hour that you would wish her to.”

“We have indeed few kin,” I cried, “and worse than none. But neither kin nor lack of kin shall hold me from my joy another day, Gorgo — not for another day, Gorgo.”

And although the city was full of inauspicious



voices, and a sob as of a rising storm was in the streets, I forgot all else but joy and Gorgo.

No hour could be inauspicious that brought me Gorgo. She came into my house as Aurora floats over the threshold of night, — a rose-glow shining with stars, blushing to brighter radiance, with a sweetness like the morning wind that flows from glens of bedded violets. It is idle to write such words: to others they are meaningless, while to me — no loveliness of earth or sky was worth comparison. A lover's words? Yes, truly — then and always these words of mine are the words of Gorgo's lover. But extravagant I cannot think them; you who say it have never known Gorgo.

So the pledges sworn in Sparta were fulfilled in Athens: the Ephors had spoken; the Royal Archon bit his lip but allowed the record. She was mine — our warring cities both had sanctioned it — my very wife in the sight of gods and men, and none had said me nay. Not Rhyzon — he strove at first to bargain, but when his shifty eyes met mine they shrunk back into his head, and he stammered such words as I bade him.

It was not a noisy wedding; this was no time for the sounding of flutes. As I could not take her from her father's house, I led her from Athena's temple, where she had prayed, as she alone could pray, and left her bracelet of pearls at the shrine of the goddess.

"It shall ever be sacred," she said, "and no other shall wear it; but she that had it was a silly maid,



— and now that I am truly wife of Hagnon's son I would wish that all that is upon me should be from him, Theramnas. You shall be paid no price for taking this Gorgo," she laughed, "but just herself; and is it not enough, Theramnas?"

"It is more than Jove himself possesses," I answered her.

And with that we passed from the dim splendour of the temple into the shining light.

"Is it not glorious upon this hill?" she said. "It is now my Athens, Theramnas. You have given me your city, Athenian boy, and Gorgo is no more a banished maid, — the fairest city of the world you have given for a kiss so long ago."

"I would give for Gorgo the fair world itself," I whispered to her. And as we wended through the sheen of marbles, men with sad, cruel faces paused to gaze, and the hard lines softened a little. Thrasybulus walked beside us, and Golas followed.

"O Golas," she had cried, "can you indeed no more say Gorka?"

But he fawned at her feet, and though tongueless uttered her name and worship in every limb. When the long stairway was reached, that led from the city of the gods to the city of men, he would not let her sandal press the common earth, but raised her in his arms and bore her all the distance to our home. We entered; and Rhyzon, with nothing left of what was Spartan in his aspect, again importunate because he saw me happy, crept toward me from his huddle



in the corner to plead anew for gold. He clutched me round the knees, but I shook him off.

“A goatherd’s hut upon the mountains, and a single slave,” I cried, “and a slave’s allowance to you both alike for sustenance. There shall you live or die, and never shall a breath of you come near to Gorgo. King Agis and his troopers will not trouble you, I think — yet care not; should the hoofs of their horses find you it is but an adder crushed. You — you that would have sold your brother’s blood into a python’s jaws for slimy darics, that you might nurse them in your filth — utter not to me another word of money or of mercy, lest I bid Golas rend you on this floor. May the Pluton of Darkness blast the foul shade within you. It shall haunt the reeking marshes, glooming over the buried gold-pots it may not finger, blighting with curses such as come near.”

He lay prone, yet lifted his head and answered me with frothy imprecations; the Spartan in him was not even then quite dead. I regarded him no more than the sweepings of the ground on which he grovelled, and the servants, dragging him out, made such disposal of him as I had ordered.

“Indeed, I could almost weep for him,” said Gorgo, — “that man will find the poverty so hard to bear. Yet I cannot truly weep for any cause this day, Theramnas; and I am glad at heart that he is gone forever.”



## XL.

### *The Vengeance of the Shades*

“CURSE the old baldpate, pull him down!”  
“Yea! yea! Shall the people be balked  
of their will?”

“A dotard!”

“Canting hypocrite!”

“His devil prompts him — he would rail to us  
of virtue!”

“Nay, patience! He will but tell us of cobblers!”

“A foe to the people — ill words always!”

“Away with him!”

“To the prison!”

“Yea — and the hemlock!”

“As guilty as they!”

“Let him share!”

“Down with him! Down! Down! We will not  
be balked!”

So roared the assembly, with a tumult as when  
the storm chokes foaming in the narrow strait;  
but he — he stood on the bema as tranquil as one  
who views that tumult from the rocky shore. Soc-  
rates — who else in all Athens could have borne it  
so?



“I will put no vote that is against the laws,” he said. “Let none expect it: I have sworn to obey the laws.” The tone was low, but strong and steady; all heard it, even amid such clamour as cowed the very onlookers.

Strange was the turn of fate which made him president that day, — the smiling, earnest questioner of men, who ever shunned politics and party, heeding only his god-given mission, the searching of souls. It was not by his choice, nor by theirs, that he stood before the people thus, in the power and peril of office; then, for the first time and the last, the daily lottery of the bean had called him to it, and then as always he obeyed the established law. That he had laughed at such election by the bean, and esteemed it folly, did not matter; he obeyed the law and took his office, and in that office still obeyed the law. That the populace raged was no concern of his; their din of cries was but a noise of winds, through which he heard another voice; threats fell from his tempered courage as darts that blunt against a shield.

He feared nothing, but those who loved him feared for his life. The people had come from their festival of mourning with anger now raised to a fury which would bear no check; the assembly like the feast was sombre with black garments, and pale, fierce faces glared from every part. The moment was not a happy one for close questionings of justice. These men would have vengeance — they were mad for victims to appease the shades that haunted them



— and woe to him who would speak of obstacles or interpose delays!

The senate, bending to their will, had reported thus: —

*Whereas, in a former assembly, all the citizens have heard the accusation, and the generals also have been heard, let the whole people pass at once upon their guilt, voting by tribes. For each tribe shall be set two urns: as many as hold the generals guilty of abandoning the victors in the fight, let them cast their pebbles in the nearer urn; if any think otherwise, let them go on to the second. In case of conviction the Eleven shall lead the condemned to death, — their estates to be forfeit, a tithe to be rendered to the goddess.*

A few cried out at that: “It is monstrous — let each have separate trial before the courts, with formal accusation and defence. This is against all law.”

“Who makes the law?” screamed Callixenus. “Shall not the people rule in Athens?” And he made the mob more frantic with frantic speeches. He was but a kite, to fly with the wind. In fair weather such a kite may soar high, and in a tempest yet higher — until the strained string snaps; then kites fall heavily. So fell Callixenus at last; but on that day he soared. A great man he deemed himself that day — Callixenus!

Some threatened him with impeachment, but his threat was the louder: “If any will shield the guilty



let him be included with them." The mob echoed it; the protesting voices were hushed.

So Socrates stood forth, — to put the vote, as many thought. "I will do nothing contrary to the law," he said. "This thing is unlawful."

Then it was that they bellowed with rage, while he gazed upon them without a tremor and without a frown.

"How dare you defy the people?" raved the demagogue. "How dare you make this stand alone?"

"I do not stand alone," he answered, in that mild voice which found a path to every ear. "For with me stand those of our ancestors who made these laws, and all the good men who have sworn to keep them, and the gods to whom they swore. Are these I see more numerous than they, Callixenus, or better worth regarding? Is it safer, think you, to defy the gods, if they and the people unhappily should differ? or did you think Callixenus could seem to me so terrible that I would fear him rather than the gods?"

While he was speaking I pressed close to the bema; my faith in the gods, I must own, was less, and my fear of the people greater. "Get about him quickly and bear him back," I said to the senators. "Put the vote yourselves, — what matter of a little further illegality? Take him off before these wolves have set their fangs in him — for they will yelp in vain; he is worth a score of such as the generals and all the laws of Solon."



It was not a time to be dainty of methods: we gathered about him and dragged him away with gentle force. He sighed, but made no futile resistance.

While we were thus engaged the advocate of the generals got possession of the bema; a cousin of young Pericles was he, and a man of ability. At first he stood silent, for the din was overmastering; but his aspect was gracious, and he waited patiently until a sudden lull permitted speech.

“Men of Athens,” he began, “we yield to your will; the proposal from the senate shall be put to vote, and we make no further question of illegality.” They calmed a little at that. “But hear also my proposal,” he continued, “and let both be put to vote together.”

Then he moved an amendment,—that the generals be remanded to the courts to be tried with all the rigour of the ancient law, but each separately, and with regular pleadings. “Let my own cousin be the first,” he said. “I ask, not mercy — only justice.” They listened; but I noted that their faces were unchanged. It is not easy to reason with mourners; yet he went on. He blamed the generals severely — blamed them for undue kindness to me. It had seemed hard to accuse a comrade in arms; they had not fully realised the extent of my negligence. It was a moment of confusion; they were flushed with the victory; they had not dreamed that I would use their clemency to turn the blame on those who sought to spare me. Even now they would not ac-



cuse me harshly. His cousin had pleaded for me; the storm was indeed some excuse; all are not endowed with equal courage. He himself, however, felt less compunction; he would not deny the dead their due. But let no mistake be made; it would be a matter of regret afterward.

Oh! was it not hard to bear? My heart knotted within me as I listened. Yet he spoke with deep earnestness, and I think believed his words; for all that he knew was from his clients, and one was a kinsman. He warmed as the speech went on. "They who have led your ships to victory," he ended, "whose only fault was excess of zeal and thoughtless kindness to an undeserving friend, — shall such as they perish by treachery in the city they have saved, and not rather be crowned before you as victors?"

So spoke the orator to scowling brows, and none of them was smoothed; he spoke, I think, some words too many. Then Callixenus rushed forward to champion the proposal of the senate; he had drawn that document with his own important fingers, and every term in it was dear to him. When he had blustered away the most of his vocabulary, the question was put, — but in a tricky fashion. The people were bewildered; some voted twice, and some not at all.

"The amendment for trial before the courts has prevailed," it was announced.

Again a roar of anger shook the very bema. "The people have been deceived," shrieked Callixenus,



white with rage. Yet no whiter than others — the cry was appalling. “Who dares to cheat the people?”

The chairman lifted his shaking arms for silence. “There has been some error,” he stammered; and the question was stated anew.

“Let all who favour trial before the courts raise the right hand.”

A few palms went up, but dropped quickly.

“And all who favour summary judgment by the people.”

The assembly waved with hands like a marsh full of flags. While the urns were being set I mounted the bema.

“Citizens,” I said, “the mode of trial has been determined; I speak not of that.”

“Aye!” they shouted, “that is decided.”

“But because these men have made me more infamous than any other who drinks Apollo’s light, I must speak.”

“We believe them not, Theramenes,” called many voices. “Aye, lad! Those poor ghosts that are warming their cold shins by Phlegethon shall have sport after all,” called another, hoarsely.

“Peace to those shades: they whisper not of me. Yet I would they might speak — for they too saw me, what I did. You would hear from them the same witness as from those who almost shared their fate, yet owe life to the hand of the coward Theramenes — whom the generals would spare. But



their tongues are still: the generals have spoken for them — the generals!”

“Nay, lads — I will speak for them if you mind not the omen of ill words.” But none laughed.

“Do you doubt that the generals heard them aright? It was somewhat far to hear. Then hear from me that was upon the spot the voices of the living and the dead — nay, you have heard the living; I will speak for the dead alone. ‘We lay low in the sea,’ they are saying — only you cannot hear — ‘and the brine was close to our lips. The last we saw of earth was this Theramenes gathering lives from the swelling waves, — Theramenes and Thrasybulus. We had hoped they would reach us, but they could not; yet had the rest been like them, not one among us would have slept that night in the salty ooze.’ These are the words they speak: I swear it by the gods above, who saw, and by the gods who listen to their murmuring ghosts below. ‘But,’ they say, ‘we saw nothing of Erasinides — nor of Aristocrates — nor of Thrasyllus — nor of any general of them all.’ And who among living men will tell you that he was saved by Erasinides?” I cried, — “by Erasinides, who grieves that Theramenes performed his unbidden task so ill, and with one ship saved so few!”

The deep-drawn breath of many throats was the only sound.

“Yet they also offer you witnesses — their own pilots! Their pilots, who with pallid faces tell you the storm was too terrible for the saving of lives, —



and with the next breath blame two ships for leaving any unrescued! 'We saw not these, either,' say the dead. 'They were on the shore, with their generals, while we were sinking.' And so say the living, who found them there, drinking while comrades drowned. But the pilots think me at fault: now as then, they are with the generals."

The voting-urns were already placed, but none stirred.

"Will you, then, hear more? I grieve to say more, for their advocate tells me they are my friends — and what they would have done had they been enemies I fear to think. This is the climax of their friendship. They say — these good friends of mine and yours, whose brows should be wreathed for the victory won by the dead — they say that they gave me ships, and strict orders, and ample powers, these men whose only fault is generosity! But when? The dead, perhaps, do not know of that, but the living will tell you. It was when I had left the sea voiceless, and the storm had done its worst. Then they called me before them, still wet, and weary with the toil of saving. 'The very man,' said my good friend Erasinides; 'he has chosen the task — let him have it.' Then it was that they issued those undated orders, and offered ships with a scoff, and planned a letter. Was it grace to me that they flinched in the writing of it? Do I owe them thanks that they faltered in their lies?"

"Now go to the urns: yet remember this, that they stand confessed. If I am guilty and they



sought to shield me, they are traitors; if they alone are guilty, and sought by lies to you to impute their guilt and shame to others, they are doubly traitors. Go now to the urns, with the eyes of those you cannot see upon you, and cast your ballots as you will."

They voted in silence; a hush was upon them, as of those that listen. Few there were who passed on to the second urn.



## XLI.

### *A Last Talk with Socrates*

A FEW days after this I had my last long talk with Socrates. We spent, indeed, many hours together, walking through shattered sunshine and quivering shadow under the Academic olives, whither I had lured him. Only for him would I have lingered so long away from Gorgo; but I loved him second to her alone, and the hum of bees and the leafy fragrance were like childhood to me, and sweet to my soul. Yet the tombs of the Ceramicus, through which we had passed on our way, had started our train of thought. The generals will not be buried here, I had said in my heart; and to him —

“You blame me, Socrates, I know. And to me what you did seems folly. We cannot agree in this.”

“We have never agreed in this,” he said. And our thoughts flew far back through lapsing years. “You hold, like other men, that taking life is better than to lose it; so it seemed to the little son of Hagnon when I bore him in my arms between those walls, and so it seems to you to-day beneath this grove: but to me it has never seemed so.”



"You blame me, Socrates. Because of Antiphon and the generals, you think me murderous. That Syrian, too, I have slain."

"The Syrian!" He seemed startled. "Had that evil thing been spared so long? I will not judge between you and the Syrian, for his life was forfeit by the laws of gods and men, and a bane to others while it lasted. Nor do I think you murderous, Theramenes, nor even cruel; you love not blood nor injustice. But ruthless of the lives that cross your deeper purposes I fear you are. Beware, lest you find it too easy to kill, and too hard to bring back to life."

"How else can any play at games with living pieces," I cried, "or hope to win in politics or war? But you, too, Socrates, were ruthless, both with the people and to yourself."

"Yes," he said, smiling, "and ruthless to the generals most of all; for if the truth must be confessed, I thought them worthy of a harsher fate. It was a great good fortune for the generals to owe their death to lawlessness and rage; they died the martyrs of a broken law who should have paid its penalty. But so injustice frustrates its own intent: the unjust death they died will be remembered, and the justice of the death they should have died will be forgotten. I would have been more severe with the generals; I would even have sentenced them to live on in their infamy. But you joined with the rest in slaying them and doing them honour."



"Indeed, Socrates," I said, "your views are not practical. Such manners as you teach might be good in that good age called the golden, but are ill suited to this evil time in which we live. For my own part, when I am struck I must strike back, as best I may with tongue or steel, even as my ancestors have done before me."

"And did your ancestors do no wrong?" he asked, — "so that for you it is enough to be like them."

"Truly, Simonides was right," I cried. "It is not possible for any man not to do evil."

"In politics, at least," said Socrates, "and if he values life more than right."

"To be squared in every angle like the builder's marble is not human," I persisted. "I will not give my life to an idle ideal."

"You will give your life for Athens, Theramenes," he said very gently. "Your soul is truer than your tongue — and this I have told you before."

"The end," I asked, — "is it now so near?" And my heart was suddenly sad.

"I think it is not far away," he answered.

"Oh, Socrates!" I exclaimed, earnestly, "I have found her — Gorgo, whom the voice promised me. She is now my own, my wife — and you tell me that the end of all is near."

"Did you not find her," he said, "in the path of duty? Still keep in the path of duty, and all shall be well with you at last."



"But Gorgo? I care nothing for the rest without Gorgo."

"Though you should lose your Gorgo for a season, if that be true and of the soul itself which binds you in one, the great circle of time will bring her back to you."

"You believe it, Socrates? I shall see her again — after death?"

"I believe it," he answered.

But I pondered upon my doom as the voice had once spoken it — my doom, that was now so near — and of all those weary cycles of waiting, and of the brand of infamy upon my name. And my heart wept within me, and my soul rebelled.

"Tell me, Socrates," I demanded, "can any man do otherwise than as it is fated?"

"If he could," he answered, "it would not be fated."

"Then," I said, "we but act our parts, and our lives are but a tragedy written by fate; we but seem to be punished, like the tyrant of a play, for crimes that we feign to commit because it is so written down for us. There is neither good nor evil, nor joy nor pain, but only fate and feigning. It is all a delusion that we truly do or suffer anything, and Apteryx was right, and the gods are useless."

Then he said, "You have been in Syracuse, Theramenes."

"It was fated so, I suppose: I could not choose."



"And you have doubtless heard of Arethusa, who from a maid became a fountain, as they say."

"I have heard the tale: what of that?"

"I am old, and perhaps grow dreamy and fanciful. But let us suppose a strange thing. Let us fancy Theramenes changed in that same fashion to a fountain, yet still alive and conscious of his course, and then consider how it would seem to him."

"It is, indeed, a strange fancy, Socrates. But we will suppose it so."

"Suppose, then, you were the spirit of yonder fountain. Would you not leap up with joy because of some power within you that prompted you to leap, so that it would be your choice to leap in the sun?"

"It would seem so."

"And when you had leaped to your limit of strength, you would fall back, like one weary, and wish to rest in the quiet of the pool."

"I suppose so, Socrates."

"And in doing this you would act according to your nature, as being a fountain, and nothing except your own nature and the force within you would compel you to it; yet you could not do otherwise."

"So it seems, in truth."

"And now observe the little rivulet that flows from the fountain, and let your spirit flow within it. Does it not say to itself, 'I will here run swift and straight, because the slope is plain and easy,' and does it not in this obey its own impulse and



do its pleasure? But yonder it hesitates before a rock, and ponders on which side to pass, and presently chooses the easier way because its mood is soft and yielding; yet in another place, because it is there more full of energy, it does not pause or turn at all, but rushes upon the stones and breaks over them. And both times, being alive, it would think, 'I do my will, as nearly as my strength and the rocks and the ground permit;' yet all the while, how could it do otherwise, being what it is? And so might not one who knew well its nature, and the ground over which it must flow, know also what course it would take, yet constrain it in nothing?"

"And is it so, Socrates, that the gods foresee our fate, and even warn us with voices, yet have not ordained it thus nor doomed us to that fate?"

"Can you doubt it, Theramenes? Is not all that is true of the spirit of the stream true also of the soul that is within you? That, too, obeys its impulse and does its will according to its strength, and ever chooses its course according to its nature, yet being what it is cannot do otherwise than as it does. For to do otherwise would be to violate its own nature, and no longer to do its will. So, and so only, the soul is subject to fate."

"Then," I said, "how can any give help or guidance to another?"

"It would be little use," he answered, "if the soul were forced. Yet another might well remove obstacles, and clear the path and make it straight, so that the rivulet will choose to follow it; and



by adding to its waters he might swell the stream and give it greater strength; or he might hinder and choke it with sand or mud, as some make foul the souls of others."

"Yet once — do you not remember, Socrates? — you told me that no other could truly harm the soul that in itself is good and pure."

"The waters of the soul may ever run clear and sweet again," he said, "despite all the mud that can be cast upon them, unless their own nature is brackish and bitter, like the soul of Apteryx, as I fear. A soul like his indeed lives in a world of phantoms, but all its delusions are in itself and not in the things that are. Such a man as Apteryx walks amid realities yet lives in dreams — ill dreams — and his soul can never be awakened till the body sleeps. I grieve for Apteryx."

"But the gods? What of them, Socrates?"

"Do you think, Theramenes, that in your body there is a soul, which alone gives it life and keeps it from dissolution, but that in all this universe, so instinct with life and full of the shapings of thought, there is no soul to dwell in it and make use of all its forms as the soul within you uses the body? Do you not know that without the soul, which animates its every part, and which men call God by many names, this strange and splendid universe would speedily dissolve into the mindless chaos of its elements, even as the body falls to formless dust when the soul has left it?" And as he spoke these words, it seemed to me as if that very spirit



were speaking by his lips. None other but Socrates, of all I ever knew, could have spoken so.

“Do you think,” he went on, “that your eye can see to the limits of heaven, and your thoughts can leap in an instant from Syracuse to Babylon or from deep Tartarus to high Olympus, and yet that the eye of God cannot see all in a single glance, and his mind know all that is or was or ever shall be? Know, too, that he lifts the souls of men, as many as will look upon him, as the sun draws up the waters from the earth; and that which rises thus is but their purest essence, for the slime and the salt and the bitterness are all left behind. Even the soul of that unhappy Apteryx, when the evil body that cases it has fallen away, may see this light that shines down from heaven, and at last be sweetened in its rays.”

And so, all day, we talked of these and other things, with the cry of the birds above us and the spraying of the fountain spreading its whisper around us. It was late, and the firmament hung low with stars, when I went back to home and Gorgo. And she met me jewelled like the drooping sky.



## XLII.

### *A Sigh of the Wind*

**F**OR Gorgo might wear her jewels now, — “all of them, all day, and all the days,” with none to hinder. She arrayed herself in these, and draped her loveliness in shimmering robes and filmy tissues, with a bubble of girlish mirth and a joyous eagerness, as of one who had long desired such outward symbols of her beauty, and claimed them as her heritage, but had long been denied.

On the morning after our wedding I had poured my mother's jewels in her lap; also those others of newer fashion which I had made ready against her coming, — for in the end I had not cast them in the sea.

“And indeed, it is well that you did not do that thing,” she cried, when I told her. “Are they not the most beautiful, — even beyond those of Ionia, with which I angered — oh, Theramnas — those old men in Sparta!” And we both laughed merrily over the memory of that, for Sparta and its joyless gloom seemed far away.

“But how dared you, Gorgo?”

“They were mine, Theramnas, from my mother,



— my own mother's jewels; and I, too, had always worn them, from a little girl. They teach that vanity very early in Ionia — for I know, Theramnas, you think me vain; but truly, that is the better way, if one is pretty and meant for jewels, and nothing comes of waiting but the loss of beautiful days.” And a trace of the old defiance rang in her tone.

“Do you think me an Ephor of Sparta, Gorgo? For my own part, I think it as right for a woman to be vain as for a man to love her for it; and surely you know that I love Gorgo from her dimpled ear to the toe that peeps from her sandal, — and jewels, too, for her sake.”

“Do you truly love me so,” she said, demurely, “and even the vanities for which I have been reproved?”

“Did ever Jove himself blame Hera for her vanity,” I cried, “and not rather find his sombre spirit brightened by it? And who but Gorgo wastes the shining hours, with a lap full of jewels?”

“Now that is very rightly said. And since you have spoken so of Jove, I will indeed array myself like Hera; and you shall love me the more, Theramnas, and be more faithful than Jove.”

I laughed at the deftness of her swift, adorning fingers. “Gorgo! Gorgo! How ever could I love you the more or the less for jewels? Yet I like that you love them.”

“And how could I not? But surely, boy, you like me the better so?” She turned toward me an ear that blushed as red as coral as it trembled with



its jewel. "See," she said, "I have missed those most of all; I am glad you remembered. They say that all the Athenian women wear them, and I would seem strange without those."

"O Goddess Gorka, you will ever seem strange, for none is like you. Yet jewels are but the lamps of beauty, Gorgo; they illumine, but they cannot make it. They illumine ugliness no less; they cannot change it."

"Then," quoth she, tossing her head till the new-found jewels, necklace and circles and coronet, danced about her laughing face, "this Gorgo may surely have her sparkling lamps, — and she was right to defy the Ephors. Indeed I am vain, Theramnas, like Hera, and if I were not very, very sure, perhaps I might be jealous, like her, too; but not proud, nor ever solemn, like that goddess" — and she laughed out, for mere gladness.

Then she made as if she would leave me, but turned suddenly and stood before me like the starry sky-queen in very truth, from Jove's own house. "See!" she cried. "Is it not this Gorgo's right to wear jewels?" And Lycurgus himself could not have denied it to her in that hour.

"Golas could never have held that arrow strained against my heart so long if he had seen me thus," she exclaimed, triumphantly. And then, as if by some swift magic, the abashing goddess was gone, and Gorgo, sweet and humble, sat upon my knee, an arm about my neck, a light hand caressing my chin.



“You great, slow-witted, sighing Jove,” she whispered, “is it not all for you, even if I were that very Hera? Nor need you look at me with such a face of prayer, Theramnas: it is yours to love this Gorgo, and keep her always, — it is not for you to worship Gorka, like Golas. Poor Golas — that is still Gorka’s helot, yet never can speak those words again! But he has a comfort now; I think he would laugh aloud in some strange fashion if he could. Have you seen him with his new bow, Theramnas? It is finished, and he smiles upon it and strokes it like some wild thing that licks its cub. You would scarcely know that bow from the old.”

I had been to much trouble, seeking a bow for Golas. I had laid before him the best that could be bought, but they snapped in his hands like rushes; he flung down the fragments and looked at me dumbly. We were both near despair, when there came in one day a shipload of arms, gathered from some far-off battle-field, — strange pieces of armour, mildewed and dented, shields leaf-shaped and made of hairy hides, curved swords with hacked edges, bent spear-heads with only splinters clinging in the socket, and pikes six cubits long but headless. Upon one of these Golas pounced eagerly; he grinned with joy and kissed the wood.

“Why do you thus bring splinters and fagots across the sea?” I asked of the trader.

“I know not,” he answered. “These were flung on with the rest — an ill bargain. Your slave is



perhaps of that country, and the wood brings back memories."

"It may be — and for my slave I will take the stick at an obol. Trimmed, it will serve as a staff."

He scanned me curiously. "Two obols," he said, "since it has come so far."

We bore it home; I could scarcely keep back Golas from running. For days he sat in his lodge scraping with flints; and when he had done, and a cord of hard-twisted gut was upon it, the new bow rang and sprung like the old. Then Golas, I think, forgot that he had no tongue.

I, too, rejoiced, for Golas with his bow was a good companion in those days. I had many enemies now, and they were such as have few scruples. They had even got the upper hand in the senate, and when the people elected me to the new board of generals, the senators debarred me from office on I know not what charges. I cared little — not enough to make an answer; it was not my wish to leave Athens. How often since have I thanked the gods for this malice of my foes! The great crime of the Hellespont, at least, none can charge against me. And I could not have prevented it; had I sailed I should have been outvoted and helpless amid those traitors. I was spared — by those who hated me.

But Golas, with bow and quiver, always followed when I walked abroad with Gorgo. For we often walked together, though many stared. I would not keep her shut in dusky rooms like other wives; she



should not weave and spin away the precious hours that still were left us, — a companion of slaves and a plyer of the weary shuttle. She loved the light, and no custom should bar her from it.

“Oh!” she cried, one day, as we were passing through the market, “it is she; it is that very woman. I have seen her so often in dreams.” She herself had stopped abruptly.

My look went after hers, and I saw — Myrinna. Yet it was not the Myrinna that I remembered. She stood in the open square with a group of youths about her, — a mad light in her eyes, and on her face the hard, ugly smile of a woman who has made her last bargain with the powers of evil, as she glanced from Gorgo to me. Even Thrasybulus could not have loved her thus.

“It is she — I have seen her in dreams,” repeated Gorgo. “But I think now it does not matter of her in the least, Theramnas.” And she held fast to my arm.

Golas, ever watchful of his Gorka, had strained the bow, and his eyes questioned us.

“Nay, Golas,” I said, “slack the string. Though it indeed looks venomous, that thing yonder is quite harmless now.”

For so I thought — perhaps with some excess of confidence, except as Socrates might have spoken the words, with a meaning deeper than mine. Such as Myrinna are never harmless long; yet their hate is better than their love, — though the two, in truth, are one. But with Gorgo clinging thus upon my



arm, Myrinna was less than the flitting shadow of a cloud.

So passed the days and the months; almost a year had passed, — the happiest of all I ever knew in Athens. The rains of winter had only brought us flowers; the spring had brought the song of birds; the season of harvest was near.

It was evening; I sat with Gorgo under the vines of the inner court, with only these and the stars above us, for the night was warm.

“Do you remember,” I was saying, “the warning that once you spoke in Sparta, — when you told me that if ever you should come to dwell in Athens the city would not long be free? Yet I was not affrighted, Gorgo, — and you are here, and Athens still is free, and even Lysander flees before her fleet.”

“Is that Lysander again in Ionia?” she asked, with a jar of the voice as when a silver goblet is set hard on the board.

“Yes — or rather he has now fled up the Hellespont, where he lies close, beneath protecting walls. They call Aracus admiral, but Lysander rules all.”

“He would indeed rule all,” she answered.

“Listen!” I cried. “Surely a storm is rising. It is pleasant here, but we must now go to our chambers. The hour is late; it is time to slumber.”

The night-wind was blowing softly up from the sea, but it came with a moan that neither sea nor wind could utter, — low, uncertain, ebbing away to



nothing in the ear, still sounding in the heart. It seemed an echo of my earliest memories.

"It is like the voice of the plague. Gorgo! it is like the sound I heard, in this very place, when I was but a child and Athens mourned her dead."

"It is like those voices of boding, Theramnas, which sometimes the gods make to sound in the sky. Oh, what can it mean — it seems so sad, Theramnas?"

Again it filled the air, swelling louder now, yet wavering with the breeze that wafted it.

"Gorgo, it is from the port — some tidings —"

"Tidings! Like that!"

And even while we spoke it grew, — a mounting cry of many voices, melted by distance into one continuous wail. It came toward us like the noise of sudden rain; it moaned through the Long Walls; it resounded within the gates. Doors clashed; the streets about us were full of footsteps and calling. Then from a dirge it rang out articulate:

"Lysander has taken the fleet; the war is ended; Athens is lost."



### XLIII.

#### *My Promise to Gorgo*

**L**AD, it was just sheer treachery in my view of it."

Meletus had steered in the *Paralus*, which brought the news; it had come alone. He stood before me absolutely sober, his great face blanched and traces of tears upon it; his state was so unnatural that I gave him wine at once. He drank, but with little zest.

"Rank treason and sheer misdirection, lad," he continued, after a heavy gulp at the flagon. "That man-eating Lysander — and may he drink of Phlegethon — had all the gold of Sardis in his pouch; and with the cursed missteering of the villainy you call politics at home it was enough. The city is merely wrecked for lack of a sufficient pilot of those tubby little voting-urns. Why did you not lay hold of the sweeps, lad?"

I could have given many reasons; but I thought of the reason — and was angry with myself and her. For the moment Athens was all; my heart had room for nothing else; Gorgo seemed Spartan and a snare.



“Lad,” he went on, gloomily, “we had the advantage of ships; and he gathered us up like an armful of oars. We lay facing — the channel was not above a fifteen stades, I would say — he with wine and corn behind, and we on a bare beach. He would not come out and fight, mind you; he was afraid, in our conceit of it. So, while we were mostly abroad gathering in the rations, he bethought himself to come across and take us. He came with a terrifying suddenness of action, lad, and I would surmise he had been watching; of nine score ships, but ten of us were manned.”

“Then all is at an end, Meletus. The last gold is gone; temples and houses are empty. No more keels will be laid; if they were, there are few left fit to man the benches. But did none in all the fleet cry out against this recklessness?”

“Well, lad, it might be there was more or less speech of the fire-fork and other matters by one observant of the rules of the craft. And that Alcibiades — whom I would deem a very adequate commander, were it not that his wine excites him out of measure — he came down from his fortress to give them good words; but they cast back at him with unseaworthy fruit and ill answers. Conon, too, upbraided with them and held himself ready — he alone. But I thought him overtimorous.”

“Timorous! how?”

“Well, I would not speak hardly of him. As we fled — the ten of us — we passed the beach where their sea-sails lay drying; and he, being well



counselled, put to shore and took them off, which was the better for our chances, though not without risk. There were near two hundred ships behind, lad, and they might well spare us a sufficient squadron for some annoyance. But when I pressed that young man to turn back against them he would not. Yet I told him plainly it was our only hope. ‘Mark you,’ I said to him, ‘we have only to sink of them, say ten each, and we shall then fight them with some chance of winning.’ But he would not, and made off hastily for Cyprus — which I account in a manner timid, yet blame him not. There was scant prospect in it, lad, and it may be I was vexed out of all soberness of judgment.”

He had grown almost cheerful as he spoke of this, but the glum look returned. “You are right, lad. This is the end of it. We are caged: they will presently block us by sea and land; the matter of bread will soon settle it. We shall eat but little, and at the end wash it down with a draught of Styx; but by the Son of Jove’s Thunder, I will drink the wine while I may.” And the flask went empty.

So Lysander came — without haste — driving in upon us the fugitives from every quarter to make our hunger the more. The sea was shut, and half the ships that hung upon our coast had been our own; Agis marched down from the hills and watched our wall. At first our mood was wolfish; we would listen to no terms; we rent such as dared suggest surrender.

“I myself felt within me something of that val-



iancy while the jars were full," remarked Meletus, "but this moderate diet of beans dealt out by count promotes moderation in thinking."

At length, when the time seemed ripe, I went before the people. "Send me to Lysander," I said, "with power to treat." Then, as some began to threaten — "You shall not be slain nor sold; you shall have peace and bread. Even the walls I hope to save. I know the Spartan and have a plan."

"The plan — tell us the plan," demanded many.

"Did Lysander tell his plan on the Hellespont?" I retorted, hardily. "To deal with him I must be as free of hand."

They shouted with anger; the very mention of the Hellespont maddened them.

"If I tell my plan I have no plan," I insisted. "Do you think there are no traitors here? Do you not know that all is heard in yonder camp? It is yours to choose; but unless you trust me wholly I can do nothing."

"Is it not Theramenes?" called voices. "The shrewdest planner in Athens! Who else can out-plot the plotters? A true friend of the people! He will save the walls."

"Do I not leave hostages among you?" I cried.

"Aye!" they answered; for all Athens knew of Gorgo. "Aye! you shall go unquestioned. You shall save the walls. We will trust Theramenes." And though many still protested, I was sent — to Lysander. With Athens in my hand I went before Lysander, — and in that Athens was Gorgo.



I had left her with Golas and Meletus; these, at least, I could trust, and I made all possible provision. She cared little for jewels now; she had found better. Despite the terror of the time she was very happy, for I left her cooing soft Dorian lullabies over our new-born babe. I had left hostages indeed.

So I made my way through the lines with flag and trumpet, and stood in the presence of Lysander. I found, not him I remembered, but a seasoned chieftain, hard and fierce, with more than Medish craft and more than Spartan arrogance. A man to whom cities were but counters on a draught-board, crime but a move in the game, slaughter but the lifting off of pieces; a man who had made a Persian prince his instrument and lavished revenues to buy his ends; an associate of the worst in Hellas, who feared him and did his bidding as worse than they. Greater than Sparta he deemed himself, and so he seemed to others. My heart sunk; my plans crumbled to powder. To him I must plead for Athens — and for Gorgo.

Yet he met me with a measure of contemptuous friendliness. "So it suits me," he said. "You are the man of them all whom I would have come before me thus." He laughed harshly. "It soothes a slight stinging of the brow to see you bending, Athenian. But come — I owe you thanks. To you I paid fortune's forfeit — to you flung one worthless bloom from a garden of weeds, — and all Hellas quails before Lysander."



He frowned so savagely that I blenched, yet saw at once that his mood was merely playful — for Lysander. I told my mission; I laid before him my plans with all my art; I begged hard for Gorgo and Athens.

“Weary me with no more words of the girl,” he said, roughly. “That folly you plucked from my path, and I wish you joy of it; the rest is your own affair. Your city is mine. You have paid a good price for your Gorgo.” His eyes blazed, and he sneered a smile. “As for your people, save them, or some of them, if they will let you; I care not. The change of government you propose, in my interest as you say, is not yours to offer but mine to dictate. Still, the scheme seems well devised and suits my purpose; you shall be my agent if you will do my bidding, and make what you may of it. But the walls go flat; I have sworn it to fortune and vowed it to vengeance.”

I entreated him; I almost clasped his knees. He triumphed for a moment to see me so humbled, then grew impatient. “Spare me the walls,” I prayed him, “spare me the walls, Lysander,” as if he had been an angry god. “The rest we may compass by management, but unless the walls are spared I cannot bring the people to submit. They will defy you to the last.”

“What is that to me?” he answered, coldly. “My men are eager for the pillage; you know what comes when a city falls by assault. It is your own affair.”



And still I persisted, for I saw no other hope. "They are mad; they will sooner die than yield the walls. And how will massacre serve your own ends, Lysander? You will have but a ruin of scattered stone, where you might have held a subject city."

"Gods of the black House of Hades!" he exclaimed, "how dare you set your will against Lysander thus? Do you think I put to the knife three thousand of your captive citizens upon the Hellespont, to scruple over the rest? And yet — the blood spilled yonder is enough. Hear me — this is the utmost, and no other from Athens should have had so much. The wall of your Upper Town I spare you, so it be held for Lysander. That about Piræus falls, and of the part between ten stades. Did you think I would leave you ports and walls, like spear and shield, to turn against me? Urge me further and I will drive this iron through your body. I have spoken."

I knew well that the limit was reached: to ask more was to lose all. When he saw me acceding, his frown relaxed; yet he went on with cruel words:

"Remember, if you let it come to storm and massacre, your Gorgo will fare like others. But observe, I would not have you lose her, lest the luck turn. So use your cleverness; keep your countrymen from running upon my pike-heads, for then nothing can save them. I will give you a hint. Leave your madmen to their diet for a season; an empty stomach soon purges madness. Linger here



for a change of the moon; or stay by Lysander's detention — it will sound the better in Athens. See, I would serve you, now that you bend to my will."

So I waited — I had little choice — through days of anguish to me and the city I sought to save. "Not yet," the hard Spartan said each morning. And Gorgo? I was in torment. At last Meletus came to me.

"How and why have you come?" I demanded. "Tell me of Gorgo."

But his answer seemed evasive. "Well, lad, I thought you might be wishing news from within."

"Speak it out quickly."

"I came a rough course, mind you; it was like the bringing in of those horses through the surf. At the first these lads here were for sending me back to help on the famine; but when I had told them it was I who sunk that Ariston and their Hermon, and that you, to whom I came, had done them damage scarcely less notable, then they let me pass. They admired me, lad, and you too were lifted in their estimation. They are more receptive than I would have surmised, being Spartan."

"Meletus, I am bound on the wheel."

"We are all on the wheel, mark you, and our joints are cracking. Doubtless you know your own courses, lad, but I would call it a slow navigation. I am sick with the tales I hear — sick, lad: I mean Meletus. I mind not that some ate of rats by the dock, — I myself have eaten of those vermin in cases of wreckage. But have you heard of him that



ate — god's fire-fork, lad, I would leave the relish of it to old Cronus, and such as have divinity to excuse it. Or of him who drew blood from his wrist to convey it to his stomach? Why can they not starve quietly, and have done?"

"But Gorgo? She is more to me than thousands. The rest are but beasts, with teeth and a maw."

"Little use of either, lad, unless for discomfort. Yet if it were mine to lay the courses, I would go to that Gorgo. She has need of you, I would say; for since that little baby died —"

"My baby! dead!"

"She does little else but weep and call upon you. It is not the lack of bread, mind you. That Golas is more persuasive than any with tongues; few can argue with him. Yet he lays before her in vain the bread that others die for; she but weeps and calls, and there is the whole of it."

Lysander was conferring with certain of our exiles when I burst in upon them. Critias sat beside him, and the wine was flowing.

"I will wait no longer," I cried, — "not one hour."

The Spartan looked up with a flush, but broke into a laugh. "Go," he said. "It is time by what I hear. They will listen now."

"Yes, Theramenes," put in Critias, "this is your part of it. You must persuade them, or we shall rule no city. I cannot smooth my tongue to such practices; I am no hypocrite."



“No,” I said, “not even a hypocrite.” And I left them.

As I passed through the city, lean creatures fawned upon me. “Is it peace?” they said. “Is it peace?” But I looked neither right nor left, nor answered, pressing on through all till I reached my home.

“Oh, Theramnas!” And whether her voice was the more sad or glad is beyond my telling. “Theramnas, do you yet know?” It was a sob, but sobbed with love no less than grief.

“I know.” My eyes were dry, for tears were not worth the shedding.

She lay on our wedding couch; she was pale, as I never had seen her. She was not white like the snow, for that is cold; she was white like a sunlit cloud in heaven, — and somehow seemed as far away.

“O boy,” she whispered — and we were boy and girl again, yet only for a moment — “you cannot yet know all, I think.” And my heart stopped.

“For now I cannot stay — O boy, I cannot stay here any longer. And it is so sweet to be with you, boy; and I thought it would be for so long, — and I cannot stay.”

“Gorgo!” I cried — in what voice I know not — “you cannot leave me, Gorgo! You are mine, my own, to the end of time.”

“Yes, yours,” she murmured, “for always, and wherever this Gorgo may be. But I am going, somewhere, into the darkness; I would love to stay,



boy, and comfort you, but I cannot. And I don't know where I am going, Theramnas — O boy, I don't know — I don't know at all, nor what will become of me, except that I will surely find my baby — our own little baby, Theramnas. For he needs his mother more than anything else — he will cry, and I shall go to that place very quickly, Theramnas."

May the gods forgive me if I was wrong: I loved my baby, but I loved Gorgo more.

"But I think you will come to me soon — you too, boy — into that great black somewhere — where we lose ourselves. Yet it seems to me that it will be ages of years before we are like *this* again." For I held her in my arms, her cheek upon my breast.

"And just as likely as not, when we meet again, I shall not even know you — at first. You must find me, boy, and tell me who I am — that I am really Gorgo — your Gorgo. It is your turn next to find out, boy."

I was dumb — with the tongue I could not speak; but close in Gorgo's ear my heart was speaking.

"For it was I that found out first, this time," she whispered, with the light quiver of a smile upon her face. "Yes, I did, boy; I just the same as made love to you, there in Sparta — but the one that knows first *must* tell the other. Do you promise — to remember and to tell? Quick, boy!"

"I promise, Gorgo."



"Yes — I heard it, Theramnas — but it seems so far. Oh! I am going now. Hold me fast, boy, — just as long as ever you can."

And with that whisper she breathed away the unknown something we call life.



## XLIV.

### *The Viper's Sting*

**I**T is not always that grief softens the spirit. I felt that I had shed my last tears; my heart was dry and hard. The last look of Gorgo had made me stone, indeed.

My life, already scarred and soiled by the rough encounters and corruptions of politics, was no more a thing to cherish as it once had seemed, — a battered cup, full of the bitterness of hemlock, the sooner drained the sooner ended. Perhaps it was just as well: I was not dainty of it now. I could use it to serve any ends without compunction; I could even fling it away if occasion should arise.

The future? — there was no future. The gods? — if they had taken from me Gorgo, speak not to me of gods. If I still loved anything it was Athens, — but of those who dwelt within it I loved none. When I passed from its gates, in all that starving city I left behind no soul more desperate; when I reached the Spartan camp, I found none more ruthless.

For they sent me back to make peace. There was little question of terms. Ships and empire were



gone already. Democracy, too, might go. The walls were forgotten. Against the return of the hated exiles a few cried out, but the voices of hunger cried louder. Any peace that would bring bread!

“Good work, thus far,” said Lysander, approvingly. “This freedom from weakness and scruples exceeds my expectation. You may yet be a great man in Hellas.”

I had still one purpose, — to save Athens from destruction; of her citizens, some — not all. Firebrands must needs be quenched, or the whole city would burn. I knew them well, these firebrands, and wrote down the names. The sycophants, too — why not be rid of some of them? and I wrote more names. The traitors — my fingers shook with eagerness to write them down — but they were mostly of our own party, and so went on the other scroll. Critias scowled with envy as he saw me making up these lists, — for proscription and for office; yet he was not denied his share, adding many names to the former and a few to the last. It was only when he named Thrasybulus for death that I rebelled.

“We must cut off all the heads of hydra and sear the neck,” he retorted, angrily. “One such hot-headed patriot of democracy may ruin our project. He more than any other, unless it be his advocate, overturned the well-laid schemes of Antiphon. I know of but one that better needs killing.”

“Shall I do all and have my will in nothing,” I demanded of Lysander, “while this Critias sulks



in your camp and marks my friends for death and threatens me?"

"Critias," said the Spartan, "if you break out thus again to mar our counsels, your own name goes to the other scroll. What care I for your Antiphons — or for Critias, either, unless you serve me? Theramenes has done much and asked little; he shall have his will as to this Thrasybulus. For the rest, he who names an enemy shall have him, and the friendship of another shall be no bar; but he who starts discord among us dies, and little it matters to Lysander."

"You have set a traitor among us," persisted Critias, rashly. "This fellow always flinches and always turns."

"Fool," cried the Spartan, "are your ears so dull that I must make them deaf? Mark this: Theramenes stands first among you, and is my chosen agent unless he flinches. If he flinches, have your will."

So it was I who bore back the terms of peace, — a long scroll wound on a staff in the Spartan fashion. Hard terms they were, but the city was not to perish utterly; and the people scarcely waited to hear or to vote before they ran to meet the cornships entering the harbour.

Then, when all was made ready, it was I who came before that last assembly, — convened to vote itself the very last. I did not mince matters — what need? Lysander was with me; his spears were about us; fate had fulfilled his vow.



"You are met," I told them, "to end this empty farce of democracy." They clamoured at that, for habit is strong. "This is idle," I said. "Do you not know that your democracy is gone already? And what but its folly has brought you to this pass? You have listened long to demagogues and traitors; you must listen now to a conqueror. Can you not see by what warrant I speak?"

Many were leaving the assembly, and of these the informers took note. Such as remained were silent.

"Thirty names," I went on, "will presently be read. To those named you must entrust the city and its government. What comes after rests with them."

Again there was a sound of murmuring. Ly-sander strode forth, and his spears pressed closer.

"Slaves," he began, "have I been merciful in vain? Already the peace is forfeit, if I will it so, and your lives no less. Are not those walls which you swore to cast down still standing? Do you think I will trust you further? Will you strain my patience? Do what you are bidden, or you will have more need of burial urns than of urns for ballots."

At that all tongues were still. The list was read, the question put. There were many who did not vote, but none made further opposition; and we, whose names were entered on that roll of infamy, marched down through sullen faces to the senate-house. We did not heed their looks; the knights,



who loved the rabble no better than we, were our escort, and the pikes of Sparta were behind.

“Now,” said Critias, “we must begin with the pious rites of sacrifice. So only can we hope to thrive.”

“Yes,” I answered, coldly, “those whose names are on the secret list must die. It was so agreed, and the most, I think, deserve it. Let us, then, slay quickly and have done.”

There was no lack of zeal in the slaying, for Critias took charge of that. Yet the people looked on calmly: it was less than they expected. Thus far they rather wondered at our moderation, for they knew well the character of those that fell. A harder thing to bear was the pulling down of the walls; yet this they did, though with reluctant hands, while the victorious enemy stood by and chanted pæans to the sounding pipes. When that was done Lysander sailed from the harbour and Agis left our fields. The people sighed with relief, and even dared to hope.

Then it was that Myrinna came to me. “I do so admire a born aristocrat,” she said, in her sweetest tones, — “a born aristocrat, like you, Theramenion, and a man of force. I have always been an aristocrat myself, in my heart, though I never dared own it. You know very well how I have always felt toward you, Theramenion; I am very frank in these matters with such as you. And now there is nothing that need stand between us; indeed, I am very forgiving, Theramenion, where I am



really interested, you know. Perhaps I shall have some little favours to ask, which you can easily grant while you are putting these people out of the way, and then I shall forget all your coldness. I knew that it could not last just as soon as I saw her — that red Spartan girl. I think a fair, pale cheek is much more elegant, — don't you? Truly, it would not have lasted long, even if she had not died. But the gods be thanked — she is out of the way at last, and that baby, too. You have still those jewels she was wearing, haven't you, Theramenion?"

And with that she looked full in my face, with much presuming in her upturned eyes. Then my tongue found speech: I broke forth upon her with words that I shall not repeat, — such as none forget and none forgive. She was pale enough now: a bleached viper she seemed, as she wheeled with a darting glance, full of venom.

"There are others," she said, "as mighty as Theramenion, and wiser."

This incident did much to bring me to myself again. To what had I been drifting? I hastened home — to the door where Gorgo used to meet me — and passed in, to silent halls and an empty chamber. And there I flung myself upon our wedding bed and wept as I think I never wept before, — and much bitterness, I know, flowed out of my soul with those tears. At the end it seemed as if Gorgo had come back to me; from that hour her spirit was ever near me. She walked beside me even in



the market, just as of old; it was only when I went among the Thirty that the sense of her presence faded. In my dreams her face was ever gazing into mine. And in those dreams I did not clearly remember that she was dead, — yet something within me knew, so that I feared and felt a bar, and could not put my arms about her as I longed to do.

In this mood it was that I went to Socrates. Few were the words that passed between us, but enough.

“Have I done wrong?” I asked him. “I know — and you know — that I have saved Athens; yet by a sort of treachery and cruel means. Was it worth what it has cost? Have I done wrong?”

“I cannot tell,” he said; “the voice is silent. This I know: I myself could not have done it. And this,” he added, — “that it is now time for you to do right — the things that are right beyond all doubt or question.”

“I set so little value on my life,” I said, “that I may as well do right, — even in politics, and in Athens.”

He sighed. “What you have done has cost you much, and will cost you more. Your soul, I think, is not unstained. Yet as it seems to me — for the voice, as I have said, is silent — you have done better for Athens than a better man.”

As I returned I came up behind Myrinna — walking slowly with Critias. “You don’t know how



clever he is," she was saying. "He will yet outwit you."

"Not he," answered the other, — "a dreamer — a weaver of words; yet dangerous, I admit. He shall steal no marches here. I will goad him into rashness through Thrasybulus, first."

"He, too, was once my admirer," she said, "but you may have him, Critias, if it serves your purpose."

They both startled as I passed them. Critias sneered; Myrinna laughed, and eyed me with a cold, deliberate malice of revenge. There was little passion in it, — only an unforgiving remembrance of injury.

I did not dally with life-freighted moments. I went straight to the house of Thrasybulus, and by great good chance found him in.

"You must flee from Athens to-night," I told him. "If not, expect the daggers of Critias. I cannot prevent; if at midnight they find you here, you are lost."

He looked long in my face. "Do you run no risk in this?" he asked.

"I do not know. I do not care. I speak true. Make haste."

"Theramenes," he said, slowly, "you have many times put me in doubt. Your ways are hard for me to follow; I have sometimes thought you worst of all those scoundrels. But this rings true; and to-night I could almost believe that you are the



deepest patriot of us all. I am sure you run much risk; but if you come to any harm by that Critias, I will avenge you or die for it. Farewell, old school-mate." And we pressed each other's hands for the last time.



## XLV.

### *"Even in That Darkness"*

NEVER had I known Critias so open and friendly as he seemed on the following day.

I really thought him anxious to make amends and heal the breach of our factions; for as things were shaping themselves we each had partisans, and both knew that for us dissension meant destruction.

"Come," he said, "we are too few to quarrel, and our common enemies too many; we are on one ship and must keep in stroke. No doubt you overheard me yesterday; well, I am glad of it, even if you warned Thrasybulus, as I suspect. I am glad he escaped; I was wrong to seek his life, for we all three were schoolmates together. That life in Thrace has spoiled my temper, I fear; they are a wild lot yonder. We learn to adjust our disputes with a slash of the knife, and doubtless lift the dagger too easily."

"I wish no quarrel," I answered, "but it is time to put our rule on a sounder basis and not repeat the deadly errors of the Four Hundred."

"Exactly," he said, smiling, "and I wish to talk these matters over with you. We will have no



misunderstandings after to-day. Ride out with me to Phylæ. I think that fort needs a stronger guard, for there are rumours of trouble from Thebes. We will look the place over together; but the main thing is, I wish to talk with you in private."

So I went, trusting little but fearing less. We rode unarmed and unattended. He held me in close argument all the way, and reproached himself repeatedly. "See how a plain talk settles all," he was saying as we mounted the pass. "We shall soon be rid of our differences now. I was more dull than my horse to put faith in such as Myrinna; but she told me a fine tale of treachery that you had confessed to her — and I believed her!"

This mention of the horse put an odd fancy into my mind: I knew horses. "The treachery is yours," I exclaimed, facing him suddenly.

His eye met mine — his features never quivered; but the horse leaped as if struck.

"Curse the brute," he cried; and his cheek flushed now. "You jest: but one would think she had felt the spur."

"A good jest, that struck home," I answered. "She felt the spur that stung her master. Never ride a horse, Critias, when you would keep secrets." And I wheeled.

He shouted harshly, in a barbarous tongue. From the thickets above started forth a band of Thracians with long knives, but I rode for my life and reached the city safe.

After that, though neither he nor I made mention



of this episode, there was open feud between us, and it grew like the turbid streams which swelled and widened under the autumn sky. The shortening days were full of strife and peril; for another summer had come to Gorgo dead, and again it was clouding to winter. Thrasybulus had surely sent some message back from Thebes, for the people whispered of me; but the more the many showed their love, the more was I distrusted by the few, whose will was the only law. Soon I was both feared and hated by most of them. Yet even among the few I had my friends, — more than dared speak, for the terror of Critias and his Thracian daggers was upon them all. I alone did not fear him — because I no longer feared anything. Besides, courage is largely a question of knowing what to do, and for me all doubts were resolved.

“For many among your ancestors have died a good death for Athens; speak a brave word, boy, and die boldly.” Thus my grandfather’s best words came back to me. Far away they seemed, sounding as from the hollow of a tomb, but I heard them distinctly. “Not even for Theramnas would I wed a traitor,” said another sweeter voice. That too came from far, out of the shadows; but I never would disappoint her trust. And after these came other tones that seemed nearer, slow and steady: “You will yet fulfil you fate, Theramenes; your death will be better than your life.” So it should be.

Lysander’s utmost threat was now accomplished:



his spears were planted on our very Acropolis. Critias had demanded them, and Lysander — who already deemed my enemy the better tool — had granted them gladly; a horde of Laconian mercenaries tented beneath Athena's lifted lance. Some day the daughter of Jove might strike; but my eyes were not to see it.

"Now," said Critias, "we are secure." And he glanced toward me. "The few can rule only by force. What fool among you thinks otherwise? But these foreign spears must be well paid and kept in humour. We must have money."

So they flattered and fondled the coarse captain of the garrison until he would do anything. Money or lives — Callibius must needs be humoured. Young Autolycus, the wrestler, had once given him the trip; for that, he himself got a fall from which he did not rise, — and the brutal Spartan strutted about the sacred hill, drunk with wine and revenge and glory.

Money must be had; but the city was bare and drained of gold. They were griping it now wherever they saw its gleam, from friend or foe, and wealth became a deadly blessing. The son of Nicias lay crushed by the silver of his mines; Leon found no space for a grave in those broad fields that doomed him; the golden shrine did not protect the priest who clung to it. When they entered a house for a seizure, they plucked the jewels off the women like soldiers sacking a hostile town.

Against all this I had cried aloud in passionate



protest, but I cried in vain and alone. Yet not quite alone: for Socrates still spoke his mind beneath the porches just as he was wont, in keen, plain, homely terms that rumour carried beyond the walls, — where they rose to a thunder of threatening voices, and echoed back to us. He was soon enjoined to silence, but answered smiling, talking to Critias and Charicles as to any others, though they foamed at the lips. When they sputtered threats and bade him connive at murder by arresting Leon of Salamis, he turned on his heel and left them. We alone, he and I, spoke out with breath unbated; but already a murmur like the rumble of a torrent filled the air.

“You have but dammed a river with corpses; the waters are gathering; make an outlet, or they will burst all barriers.”

So I warned, and in one demand I prevailed: three thousand were listed as citizens.

“It is not enough,” I urged. “What magic in three thousand? Let all be citizens who fight with horse or shield; give the city to its defenders. So I said before; so I say now and always.”

“Aye,” answered Critias, “so you said before: we have reason to remember. But what befell before shall not chance again. I will not yet return to Thrace.”

“You have never left Thrace,” I retorted. “Athens is Thrace since Critias entered it. We will all dwell in Thrace through you.”

But, plead as I would, three thousand and no



more were enrolled; nor was anything bettered by this, for whatever good might have come of it Critias turned to evil. Those on the roll had gained no right but to serve our will and share our crimes; the rest were stripped of their arms and outlawed altogether.

They huddled in Piræus as they could, but scattered fast across the border. Thebes swarmed with them; their bitterest enemies gave shelter: while we — even in Sparta our names were a scoff. Only Lysander commended us — all-powerful still, but hated no less than we.

Lysander! His boasted forfeit would serve no longer; already his fortune hung at the turn. Fate stood ready to break her thread, — then, from Ec-batana to Gades, all fortunes would change; the world would enter on new courses. Sparta would wane; Hellas would wane; Persia would fall in ruins. The words of Socrates, with the language that he spoke, would go to the ends of the earth, more enduring than the nations; a greater than Socrates would come. Of this I have merely read — after the lapse of centuries; I know of it no more than you. For when fate reached out her hand to break the thread, the fibre that snapped first was mine.

Other things I have read in history, that touched me more nearly. Long had I waited to learn of them; strange it seems beyond belief. How Lysander stumbled; how Thrasybulus led back Athens to her own, and avenged me; how Critias fell



by the arrow of Golas. Nay — the last I did not read; it was only written that he fell — but I know. He was found dead after the battle, — transfixed with an arrow that had riven through shield-plates and breast-plate, ribs and heart. With strange feelings have I read what was written — and between the lines what never was written.

Thus came the end at last. Critias rose in our council. His heavy jaw was set, his face was sordid, but his eyes sparkled with malice. “Some of you,” he began, “are wont to frown upon me.” And he gave me his usual glance. “But to-day I have something to propose which I hope will please you.”

We listened — some eagerly, some with dread.

“We have done much for the public,” he went on, smoothly. His speech had been carefully conned. “We have suffered much for our staunchness — except one, perhaps. But I hold no grudges. We must have no divisions; we will have none. He shall share.”

Then I knew his aim, but not yet what shaft he had chosen.

“We have sacrificed much in the past — except that one, and he shall share. Why should we serve the public only? Why should the hungry Spartan alone have gold? I propose that we deal more justly with ourselves.”

I knew that most of our number had done themselves no injustice — where money was concerned.



But these were they who listened most intently, with conscious faces and applauding smiles.

"You approve: I can see it plainly. Well, those who were citizens have little left; what they had has been spent to counteract their own folly, and we are still unrewarded, unless by the satisfaction of our acts. But the alien metics are many and rich. They love us no better than others; we have good grounds. I have made up a list of them; we will each choose one, and add two or three of the poorer for an answer to fools. For of course it is all done for the public good — like the rest," he concluded. And again he looked toward me.

"You propose to me to choose an innocent man to be murdered for my purse?" I demanded, hotly.

"Oh, well," he said, "that is a matter of phrasing. I suggest for you Lysias, the writer; to put out of the way a sophist is a good deed, you must admit. I would add our old Socrates for one of the poorer, — only the question is now of metics; he can come later. I am giving you one of the best. This Lysias is rich and has stored gold; and I know of no ranker advocate of democracy among all the metics. See, I have written it down for you." And he held up his tablets.

"Strike my name from the list," I cried. "I will none of it."

He started, as if with a sudden thought. "Do you insist?" he said. "It shall be done."

"I, too, refuse," exclaimed Eratosthenes, as I turned to go. "This is the worst yet, — infamous."



Critias glared at him with eyes of Thrace. "Take thought," he said. "He who will not share our infamy, as you call it, is not of us. Shall I blot off your name?"

The man turned pale. "Gods of hell," he muttered, "I suppose I must go with the rest."

I dreamed that night a sombre dream. I was acting the part of Palamedes in "The Witness" of Agathon. The dream ended in thick darkness. I arose with that cloud still about me: I seemed not to have waked. I called Golas.

"My faithful slave," I said, "you have ears, at least, and a hand; never but once have you failed me. Now listen closely, and obey. I go again to meet Critias, — him you saw with Myrinna, whom you once would have shot, but I checked you. I shall hold back your arrows no more, I think. If I come not at evening, find Meletus; he will understand. With him make haste over the border — to Thebes — and there seek out Thrasybulus. Give him this ring as a token. To him attach yourself — he will gladly receive you. Follow him as you have followed me, and serve him well."

And Golas clasped my feet and wept upon them; but his soul had long been mine and knew no other thought than to obey. So I left him — forever — and went forth to the senate-house. The Thirty were in their places; the full senate was on the benches. I needed no telling what it meant; I had scarcely reached my seat when Critias stood up to denounce me.



“A traitor of old,” he cried, “and now again a traitor: none can trust him. He incites to deeds which only violence can compass, yet shrinks from violence, and at the crisis ever shifts. An easy ‘slipper’ he, as even the mob have called him, — a loose fit for either foot, and quickly shuffled off. Our courses are not politic, he informs us. Of policy he has much to say. One policy alone he comprehends, — to buy safety and new glory with the lives of friends. That we shall now prevent.”

This and much more he recited before them, lashing my name with stinging words of studied hate; all the best and the worst of my life he turned against me, — truth and falsehood, so mingled that truth was made falser than lies. I will not repeat what he said; it has been repeated too often. Xenophon — who loved neither him nor me — has recorded it after a fashion; and Lysias has added worse — Lysias, to keep from the stain of whose blood I died!

Nor will I rehearse my answer: all that I have written is my answer. Yet I would not have you think it rightly recorded. Young Xenophon — who heard me not — has but given me words of his own; he was vain of his pen, and such is ever the custom of those who write history. I was pleading before them for honour, not for life; I used no idle sophistries upon that day, but spoke aloud as one speaks within his soul. I will leave untold the greater part; but thus I ended my last defence



among men, my final appeal for justice to my name:

“Faithless he calls me — he, the Thracian! But I answer your thoughts, not his words. I would be faithful to the few if they would be faithful to Athens; I would be constant to the many if they could be constant to themselves. But when some are traitors — like him who calls *me* traitor — and the rest are the fools and tools of traitors, what other than what I have done could I do? I could not do as Critias has done: I have not dwelt in Thrace; the honour code of Critias is new to me.

“He calls me the ‘slipper’ — Critias! He — the iron boot of the torture-chamber — denounces me as the ‘slipper.’ And I accept it. Gladly would I be called the ‘slipper’ if I might give the bruised foot of Athens rest. Some ease she might find in the ‘slipper.’

“A betrayer of friends? No friend of mine, no friend of Athens, ever came to harm by me. Are they my friends who, to cap a carnival of murder, seek my life? like Antiphon? like Critias? Is it treason to differ with Critias? I know well it is death, but is it treason?

“Do you call it oligarchy, — this tyranny of Critias? Do you not all see that he has himself subverted the oligarchy? Or is he a friend to oligarchy who has robbed it of all friends, forced it to crime, doomed it to overthrow? Is he your friend who has roused all Hellas against you, and am I, who strove to avert it, your enemy? He is not



your friend, but your master, and well you know it. A short, steep path to ruin is this Critias, who calls me a betrayer.

"I have offended you: but you will only condemn me to death, exactly the same as if I had pleased you." And I glanced at the Thracians who stood behind, with swaggering looks and daggers ill concealed. "You will vote as Critias bids, on these open tables under his eye. But be it my glory or my shame, this I know, and all of you know it: I have saved my city, though I gave it over to you, and even to your oligarchy I have been more true than any other."

So I ended, fearlessly, expecting death. But they — after a breathless moment of silence the whole senate broke forth in applause; with one voice they applauded. So near was I to victory — even within that Thracian dagger-circle! My colleagues sprang to their feet — in alarm — in hope. Critias paled, but leaped to the platform. The daggers pressed closer.

"There are times," he said, in a voice that shook with rage, "when it becomes the duty of a president who knows his business, seeing his friends deceived, to judge for them. This I shall do to-day; nor, indeed, will these whom you see around us endure it that such a manifest traitor escape. Under our present laws, it is true, none whose names are there enrolled" — and he pointed to the list of the Three Thousand on the wall — "none of those can be condemned without your sanction; others may



die by the will of the Thirty. I blot the name of Theramenes from that list. He is condemned. Let the Eleven do their duty."

There was a cry; then a hush. I sprang to the altar — yet smiled in my heart as I did it. An altar as a bulwark against Critias! Words were as impotent — a fence of air against steel — but I would not spare my breath while I had it.

"Will you go like beasts to the slaughter?" I called, loudly. "Is any name less easily blotted than mine? Will you give your throats to the knife like bulls herded for the sacrifice, and look unmoved on the death of others while you wait your turn?"

But the only sound was the rasp of daggers slipping from the sheath. Satyrus dragged me roughly from the altar, and from the hall, still calling.

"Swallow your tongue," he exclaimed, with a curse, as he led me through the street. "Be silent, or you will fare the worse."

"Shall I fare the better for silence?" I laughed. "Will silence here save me from silence yonder?" And I used my voice as I chose.

The way was short; I soon stood in the prison gloom. The cup was ready, and I drained it with a smile.

"It is less bitter than many I have tasted," I said. "As sweet a draught to the gentle Critias:" and I flung the last drops, as in cottabos, against the prison door. The note rang true. Then I laid myself down, as they bade me, and screened my face for death.



And there the old, almost forgotten question asked itself: What is it that happens? Well, I thought, I shall find out now. And soon I felt my soul sinking into the infinite as a water-drop melts in the sea: the prison, the hard ground on which I rested, had passed from me; I was quite alone — falling, floating, I could not tell — in unknown spaces empty of light or sound. Then Gorgo came to me, luminous out of the vacancy, reaching toward me with both her arms. And the last I remember is this: her sweet face vanished back into darkness; whereupon there fell before me a shower of rose petals, which shone like little flames of soft sunset light; I was swooning with their fragrance; and as the last spark fluttered down, I too was lost in the dark.

For twenty centuries I slept.

THE END.

*Home Rip Van  
Winkle I'll say.*



























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